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THE AUTHENTICATION OF PREACHING
" "
IN THE ANABAPTIST-MENNONITE TRADITION

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Theology
at Claremont, California

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
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" "
June 1971

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INTRODUCTION

Preaching, particularly in Protestant tradition, has been seen as a central function of the ministry. To draw the line too sharply between the preaching, priestly, and teaching functions of ministry is to do violence to the full dimensions of Christian community. However, in a day of depreciation of preaching, it is the presupposition in this dissertation that preaching, properly understood, continues as a crucial function of Christian ministry.

A. PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study arises out of the question: What authenticates, validates, gives authority to preaching? The purpose in asking this question is twofold. First of all, as a pastor for twelve years, I ask this question in an attempt to understand what it is that authenticates my own preaching to the people to whom I preach. Secondly, aware that only limited attention has been given to the study of preaching in my denomination, I hope that this study will contribute to the understanding of preaching and the authentication of preaching in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, and specifically in the General Conference Mennonite Church.

A brief autobiographical note may help to clarify the first purpose. More than I have been aware, Paul's declaration to the Corinthians, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," has shaped my understanding of life, of the church, and of Christian ministry. This verse, punctuating the writ-

ings of Menno Simons, and motto of the General Conference Mennonite Church, has had an explicit influence upon my ministry.¹

My preparation for the pastoral ministry in college and seminary included concentration in Biblical Studies. This has led to a pastoral style that has taken seriously the preaching role of the minister. For the ultimate purpose of Biblical Studies has been seen as proclamation, the preaching of the Gospel, in order to make available to people the resource of the Word of God for their lives. "So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the preaching of Christ."²

Twelve years of pastoral ministry and of preaching have also helped me to understand changing moods in society and the church. The process of acculturation, a new authority structure, new communication structure, the small group movement, have all affected preaching. So it is out of my personal involvement, my own situation as a pastor to whom people continue to look for a Word that speaks to their needs, as well as the knowledge that others absent themselves from the preaching because they have not found such a Word from the preacher, that I come to this topic. How can I meet these needs more effectively? What has been the role of preaching in my tradition? What authenticates preaching in my tradition and contemporary situation? What authenticates my preaching?

¹1 Cor. 3:11.

²Romans 10:17; also 1 Cor. 1:21.

Having been led to this study by a personal need to understand my preaching, I soon found myself engaged in intensive conversation with my own tradition. Through personal conversation and correspondence with several Mennonite historians, preachers, theologians, and church leaders including Erland Waltner, Russell Mast, Cornelius J. Dyck, Paul Miller, Cornelius Krahn, Arnold Nickel, David D. Eitzen, and others, I found that little attention had been given this subject in our denomination. Further conversation with other pastors of our churches indicated considerable concern about the authentication of preaching, and interest in this topic. Thus it is my hope that this effort will stimulate also other pastors to study within the context of their tradition and own congregations the preaching task, that preaching may indeed be authentic communication with the ring of saving truth to the hearer, that people may respond to the Gospel and claims of Christ, be built up in the fellowship of the church, and serve their fellowmen.

B. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The topic is stated as "The Authentication of Preaching in the Anabaptist-Mennonite Tradition."

The question of authentication is: What is it that gives authority, validity, the "ring of saving truth" to preaching? What are the elements and how do they function in making the preaching worthy of acceptance or trustworthy? That is, more than an accurate restatement of Biblical perception and insight, we must deal also with the listener in his situation here and now, and how the preaching may

meet the recognized or unrecognized needs of the hearer. What is it that authenticates preaching for preacher and hearer?

The interest in preaching involves us in consideration of the Scriptures, preacher, congregation, Spirit, and also the world (as context and goal of preaching). We will be interested both in the concept, the function and purpose of preaching, and in the practice, the content and style of preaching, and how these contribute to authenticate the preaching act and message.

By Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition I refer to groups coming out of the Sixteenth Century Reformation movement, called by George H. Williams, "The Radical Reformation,"³ and more specifically the "Evangelical Anabaptists," later called "The Mennonites." The contemporary section of the paper will focus on preaching in the General Conference Mennonite Church which will hereafter be referred to as the "General Conference."

The General Conference grew out of the John H. Oberholtzer schism in 1847 in Pennsylvania and was organized at West Point, Iowa, in 1860. Today this group, whose executive offices are at 722 Main, Newton, Kansas, represents 295 congregations with a membership of 55,631 in the United States and Canada, and is the second largest Mennonite body. Note that the use of "General Conference" should not be confused with the largest Mennonite body, the Mennonite Church, (or Mennonite General Conference) which has executive offices at

³George H. Williams (ed.) Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers (London: SCM Press, 1957), pp. 30-31.

Scottdale, Pennsylvania.

C. METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

Three chapters will be used to present the topic. Chapter one, "A History of Mennonite Hermeneutics in Preaching" utilizes a church-historical approach. The method is descriptive, and is intended to provide perspective for the understanding of preaching in my own tradition. The chapter will include a brief history of the Anabaptists in an attempt to understand the essence of Anabaptist-Mennonite hermeneutics. Note will be taken of "primitive Anabaptism" and developments in Anabaptism following the first generation of the movement. Anabaptism will also be studied against the background of Catholic, Humanist, Lutheran, and Calvinist views of the Christian faith, the church, and preaching, in an attempt to understand the distinctive views that have implications for preaching.

In tracing the history of preaching we shall call attention to the sources and concern of Anabaptist preaching, noting the elements that authenticated the Anabaptist preaching, such as their view of the Scriptures, the call and conduct of the preacher, the congregation, the Spirit, and their view of the world. Developments in preaching in several Anabaptist-Mennonite groups will then be mentioned. The historical section will conclude with a description of the impact of education upon the General Conference and the influence of educational institutions upon preaching in the General Conference.

Chapter two, "Contemporary Preaching in the General Conference," tries to utilize sociological studies. In this section we

shall try to understand the purpose and practice of preaching at the present time in my denomination. Does it reflect the strengths of the tradition? What are the influences that shape preaching in the General Conference? How is the authentication of preaching understood? But also, what is the context in which preaching in the General Conference takes place today?

Research for this chapter has included:

- 1) a questionnaire survey of the General Conference pastors,
- 2) a questionnaire used with my congregation, the First Mennonite Church, Upland, and
- 3) utilization of the 1960 and 1970 "General Conference Mobility Studies" by Leland Harder⁴ to understand the specific context for preaching in the General Conference.

Certain influences from the cultural environment will also be considered, such as the movement from sect to denomination, the pluralism of modern society, and the new authority and communication structures of our day. The chapter will conclude with a summary of contemporary preaching practice in the General Conference in light of historical Anabaptist hermeneutic and preaching.

Chapter three, "Toward an Understanding of What Authenticates Preaching," is a further analysis of the factors in preaching, and their relationship regarding the question of authentication. In taking Nachfolge Christi (discipleship) as the key concept in Anabaptist-Mennonite understanding of Christian faith, we will examine the relationship of proclamation and discipleship against the background of contemporary word and engagement theologies. In examining factors in

⁴Leland Harder, General Conference Mennonite Church Fact Book of Congregational Membership (1971)

preaching as Scriptures, preacher, congregation, Spirit, and world, we ask again: What is it that authenticates? How do each of these authenticate or do they authenticate? What is their role and relationship in the authentication of preaching? Recognizing the strong reliance of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition on the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures, particular attention is given to the hermeneutical question and the Anabaptist-Mennonite understanding of history, the Old Testament, the centrality of Christ, and the significance of the hermeneutic community.

The conclusion will call attention once again to the major development in Anabaptist-Mennonite preaching, from a Great Commission motivation to withdrawal and an admonitory stance, and recovery of "Anabaptist vision" of missions-service. But the emphasis on discipleship expression of Christian faith cannot be seen apart from nor neglect the kerygma, the proclamation of the gospel and grace of God through Christ. For it is ultimately the Living Lord who authenticates preaching as witness to the Word of what God has done, is doing, and will yet do for us men and our salvation in Jesus Christ.

D. LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Scope of Subject

Because of the scope of the subject, I have had to narrow the field of inquiry in the contemporary section to my particular denominational group. Only brief reference is made to developments in preaching in groups as the Mennonite Church, while other Mennonite bodies as

the Mennonite Brethren and Evangelical Mennonite Brethren are not mentioned at all.

The Sources

Since the nature of this dissertation is integrative more than original and exhaustive research, I have relied heavily on the work of recent interpreters of Anabaptism⁵ and Anabaptist hermeneutics.⁶ I have had access to the writings of Menno Simons⁷ and other Anabaptist preachers and have tried to focus on their understanding of the Scriptures and view of preaching. Visits to the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries Library, Elkhart, Indiana, and Mennonite Historical Libraries at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, and at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, have also been helpful.

⁵Here I have used the writings of the late Harold S. Bender who was President of the Goshen College Biblical Seminary; Cornelius Krahn, Professor of Church History at Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas; the late Robert Friedmann, Professor of History and Philosophy at Western Michigan College, Kalamazoo, Michigan; Cornelius J. Dyck and John C. Wenger, both Professors of Historical Theology at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana.

I have drawn heavily on The Mennonite Encyclopedia (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1950-59) and Mennonite Quarterly Review, scholarly journal devoted to Anabaptist-Mennonite history, thought and life, published by the Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana.

⁶Henry Poettcker, "The Hermeneutics of Menno Simons" (unpublished Th. D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1961); William Klassen, "The Hermeneutics of Pilgram Marpeck" (unpublished Th. D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1961); and Walter Klaassen, "Word, Spirit, and Scripture in Early Anabaptist Thought" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Oxford, 1960).

⁷Menno Simons, The Complete Writings (Scottsdale, Pa., Herald Press, 1956)

Methodology

Preaching happens in actual situations of preacher-congregation relationships. Preaching is not even a "written sermon," let alone ideas about preaching. Thus to ask questions of preachers about preaching does not begin to touch the whole of preaching. For preaching has to do with the total combination and impact of preacher, congregation, message, and Spirit. Outside of the questionnaire with my own laymen, and reading, I have not worked significantly with the congregations or hearer-response to preaching. Here, for example, one might have focused on the "Lay Expectation Factors" in the authentication of preaching,⁸ or studied the preaching of several ministers in the total context of their congregation and community. But perhaps this study can serve as stimulus for additional investigation into the authentication of preaching today, that God's Word might continue to come with pertinence to man's need, even through the preaching.

⁸Note the methodology used by Marvin J. Dirks, "The Lay Expectation Factors in the Preaching of Helmut Thielicke" (unpublished Th. D. dissertation, Boston University, 1968).

CHAPTER I

A HISTORY OF MENNONITE HERMENEUTICS IN PREACHING

A. UNDERSTANDING ANABAPTISM

The Anabaptist movement, far from being a homogeneous entity, consisted largely of more or less autonomous congregations. Geographic, cultural, and linguistic differences accentuated diversity. No simple scheme of classification can adequately categorize Anabaptism. However, at the outset it is essential to consider briefly attempts to understand Anabaptism which demonstrate both the range of belief and emphasize as well the spirit and essence of the Anabaptist movement, in order that we may become aware of distinctive understandings of the church and Christian faith that ultimately shape the preaching.

Terminology and Classification

"Anabaptist" comes from a Greek word meaning "rebaptizer" and was used in the church from the 4th century onward in reference to the rebaptism of those who had been baptized by heretics, or of those who had been baptized by bishops who had temporarily and partially recanted under persecution.

"Anabaptist" appears as early as 1532 in English, though seldom in German or Dutch where the translation Wiedertäufer and Wiederdooper¹

¹H. S. Bender, "Anabaptist," Mennonite Encyclopedia (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955), I, 113-4. This work will hereafter be cited as ME.

is used from the beginning of Anabaptist history in 1525. The term was not used by the Anabaptists themselves who vigorously objected to the term applied to them, which is understandable in that the imperial law code from Justinian's time (A.D. 529) made rebaptism a heresy penalized by death. The Anabaptists of the Reformation denied the readiness of an infant to receive baptism on New Testament terms. They called for baptism only on confession of faith and commitment to discipleship by the candidate. They denied that infant baptism was baptism at all and hence denied that they were "rebaptizers." Nor could they accept being classified as heretics in their strong conviction that they were the true church and that the Roman and Protestant churches were false churches.

In German church history it has been customary to call all those who opposed the Lutheran Reformation Schwärmer, a term that carries the sense of "sectarian" and somewhat "fanatical" and "unbalanced." The designation comes from a state-church mind which has difficulty conceding the validity of the free church concept.

"Enthusiasts" was a term used in the Elizabethan Age by leaders of the Church of England in referring first to Anabaptists and then to Puritans, to groups who broke away from historic Christendom as expressed in the state churches.² The term implied that such schisms were due to overemphasis on immediate guidance by the Holy Spirit or an "inner light," excessive emotionalism or self-exaltation at the expense

²R. A. Knox, Enthusiasm (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), cited by H. S. Bender in "Enthusiasts," ME, II, 227-9.

of common sense and proper respect for tradition.

In the 18th and 19th centuries the Schwärmer (Enthusiast) designation continued as a term of contempt, but following Gottfried Arnold³ (1666-1714) liberal thinkers began to see in the "heretics" of the Reformation true Christians, forerunners of Pietism and the Enlightenment, pioneers of the modern religious spirit to whom credit was given for development of modern toleration and freedom of conscience.

This newer interpretation of Anabaptism came to a climax in Ernest Troeltsch's application of sociology of religion and the distinction of a sect type from the church type, i.e., state church.⁴ Walter Kohler⁵ and other historians have followed with sympathetic treatment of Anabaptism. However, the Berlin historian, Karl Holl⁶ challenged this approach with his essay, Luther und die Schwärmer, linking Anabaptism with the fanaticism of Thomas Müntzer and the Zwickau prophets. The Luther renaissance in the 20th century has largely taken Luther's position against the Schwärmer.⁷

³Gottfried Arnold, Gottfried Arnolds unpartheyische Kirchen und Ketzer-Historie (Schaffhausen: Hurter, 1742).

⁴Ernest Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), I, 331.

⁵H. S. Bender, "Historiography I: Anabaptist," ME, II, 753. See also H. S. Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision, in Guy F. Hershberger (ed.) The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1957), p. 29, n2.

⁶Karl Holl, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchen-geshichte (Tubinger Mohr, 1923), I, 422-59.

⁷H. S. Bender, "Enthusiasts," ME, II, 228. See also the new study by John S. Oyer, Lutheran Reformers Against Anabaptists (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964) and the review of Oyer's work by Lowell H. Zuck in Mennonite Quarterly Review, XL:2 (April 1966), 159-60.

Harold S. Bender and a younger generation of Mennonite scholars have rejected the Schwärmer (Enthusiast) interpretation. Bender summarizes Anabaptism as a "sober, Biblical, realistic theology of regeneration and discipleship, subject to the Word, constitutive of a true New Testament church."⁸

American church historians have suggested several other terms to classify Anabaptism. Roland Bainton of Yale, using the political connotations of "left" and "right," proposed the term "Left wing of the Reformation"⁹ for the movement opposing the state church idea and championing the free or nonconformist church idea. Despite the vagueness of the term, it has been widely used.

Franklin Littell, in an effort to sharpen the focus, has pointed to the doctrine of the church as the primary classifying principle. Thus "Restitutionism" is the characteristic of the Anabaptists, "those in the radical Reformation who gathered and disciplined a 'true church' upon the apostolic pattern as they understood it."¹⁰

George H. Williams of Harvard has more recently come out with the designation "the Radical Reformation."¹¹ Williams distinguishes

⁸Bender, "Enthusiasts," ME, II, 228.

⁹Roland Bainton, "The Left Wing of the Reformation," Journal of Religion, XXI:2 (April 1941), 127.

¹⁰Franklin H. Littell, The Anabaptist View of the Church (Boston: Starr King Press, 1958), pp. xvii, 79ff.

¹¹George H. Williams, The Radical Reformation (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), p. xxiv; see also Williams (ed.) Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers (London: SCM Press, 1957), pp. 19-35.

between "magisterial Reformation" (territorial Protestantism), where the princes were the real heads of the church and there was excessive ecclesiasticism, and its opponents, called "Radical Reformation." Common to the radical reformers is their opposition to "the suffocating growth of ecclesiastical tradition," and to the compromises and adjustments of the new territorial churches to the "world." The radical reformers had no place for state powers in the church. They wanted to cut back to the Biblical roots of faith and order.

Among the radical reformers Williams distinguishes three groups: a) the Anabaptists, b) the Spiritualists, and c) the Evangelical Rationalists. The Anabaptists are further categorized as a) evangelical (Swiss Brethren, Mennonites, Hutterites), b) revolutionary (Münsterites), and c) contemplative (Hans Denck).

The evangelical Anabaptists, with which this history is primarily concerned, looked back to the New Testament and apostolic church for a pattern of a church of discipline and order. Emphasizing discipleship, their view of the church was that of a suffering church. So Sebastian Franck, the 16th century spiritualist had written of them in his Chronica (1531), "they taught nothing but faith, love, and the cross."¹²

In summary, it is important to note that in these attempts at classification, it is the Anabaptist view of the church that appears a distinctive and determinative factor. It is this view of the church

¹²Robert Friedmann, "Chronica," ME, I, 588. See also Ethelbert Stauffer, "Anabaptist Theology of Martyrdom," Mennonite Quarterly Review, XIX:3 (July 1945), 179-214. This work is hereafter cited as MQR.

that helps us see more clearly the Anabaptist understanding of authority and the Scriptures (especially the New Testament) as normative for doctrine, ethics, and polity.

Beginnings of Anabaptism

This brief history of Anabaptism will outline the significance of key persons and events in the Anabaptist movement in Switzerland, Holland, and South Germany. In so doing we will also call attention to both common and distinctive elements important for our understanding different Mennonite groups and their preaching today.

Switzerland. Harold S. Bender has pointed to the significance of Conrad Grebel (ca. 1498-1526) in the founding of Anabaptism.¹³ It was Grebel who performed the first adult baptism in Zürich on the night of January 21, 1525, which gave rise to the Zollikon congregation, first attempt at a believer's church, which within two months had attracted 130 members.¹⁴

Grebel, the son of a prominent Zurich nobleman, studied under the humanist scholars Glarean (Basel, 1514) and Vadian (Vienna, 1515-1518), but apparently did not acquire an interest in the Erasmian type of Christian humanism and reform of religion.

In 1522 Grebel came under the powerful Gospel preaching of

¹³H. S. Bender, Conrad Grebel (Goshen, Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, 1950) is the definitive biography of Grebel. See also H. S. Bender, "Grebel, Conrad," ME, II, 566-75.

¹⁴Fritz Blanke, Brothers in Christ (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1961).

Zwingli, who from the beginning of his career in Zürich had carried on a new program of expository preaching covering many of the books of the New Testament. Grebel became an enthusiastic supporter of Zwingli, but broke with Zwingli following the October, 1523 disputation which attempted to put pressure on the city council to abolish the Mass and do away with images. When the city council refused to act, and Zwingli backed down, Grebel and his friends felt betrayed by Zwingli. Debates with Zwingli followed on the issue of the church. Grebel wanted to see a church governed only by the Word and Spirit of God, free from the control of the state. Grebel wanted absolute loyalty to the Word of God regardless of the consequences.

Then in 1524 Grebel sought allies in writing to Andreas Carlstadt, and Thomas Müntzer, Lutheran ministers who had apparently broken with Luther. Grebel's Letters to Thomas Müntzer,¹⁵ though they never reached Müntzer, are an important document, clarifying not only the Anabaptist relationship to other personalities and movements in the Reformation, but suggesting a program of Anabaptist conviction: sola scriptura, a Lord's Supper which followed the directives of Christ, a plain meetinghouse, the baptism of converted disciples of Christ, brotherly discipline according to Matthew 18, rejection of force and violence in human relationships, and the readiness to take up the cross of discipleship and "suffering love."

The final break with Zwingli came in the public debate January

¹⁵Williams, Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers, pp. 73-85. The most recent transcription and translation is by John C. Wenger, Conrad Grebel's Programmatic Letters of 1524 (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1970).

17, 1525, over the question of infant baptism.¹⁶ The council mandates that followed ordered Grebel and Manz and their associates to cease their teaching and preaching activity, and ordered immediate baptism of all unbaptized infants. Thus was set the stage for what happened that night of January 21, 1525, when the group met for prayer in a home in Zürich. A priest, George of the House of Jacob (but commonly known by his nickname, Blaurock), knelt before Grebel requesting believer's baptism. Grebel complied, whereupon others came to George, asking him for baptism.

From this meeting the group went out with a sense of divine mission. Fearing neither Zwingli nor the council, they went from house to house and into the towns and villages teaching and preaching and urging men and women everywhere to join them in their new fellowship. In spite of arrests and fines and imprisonments, the people responded. By Eastertime Balthaser Hubmaier and practically his whole parish in Waldshut had been baptized with 300 adult participants.¹⁷ Grebel had great success in St. Gallen where about 500 were baptized at one time.¹⁸ Following imprisonment and harrassment of Anabaptist leaders the Zurich council took action to enforce the death penalty by drowning for participation in the new movement. So Felix Manz met death in Lake Zürich on January 5, 1527, the first in a long list of Anabaptist mar-

¹⁶Bender, "Grebel, Conrad," ME, II, 571-2.

¹⁷Henry C. Vedder, Balthaser Hubmaier (New York: Putnam, 1905), p. 112.

¹⁸Bender, Conrad Grebel, p. 143.

tyrs.¹⁹

A further word should be added here about Balthaser Hubmaier, an outstanding pulpit orator and writer who was in close contact with the Swiss Brethren. Of particular note is his writing about the freedom of the will, the inner capacity to choose or to decide.²⁰ This is one of the few Anabaptist speculative-theological writings. Though Hubmaier's conversion from the priesthood to Anabaptism involved taking his stand on the principle that the view of Scripture is the only voice of authority, his use of scholastic categories and appeal to the Fathers in his writing sets his work apart from the Biblicism of most Anabaptist treatises. J. Loserth makes the assessment that Hubmaier was not of great permanent influence on the later Anabaptist-Mennonite movement since he diverged from the mainline of Anabaptists on the question of nonresistance. The Baptists have viewed him as their great hero among the Anabaptists.²¹

Holland. Melchior Hofmann, the furrier-evangelist of Strassburg who turned from Lutheranism is credited with transplanting Anabaptism from southern Europe into North Germany and the Netherlands.²² Five years after the beginning of Anabaptism in Switzerland he carried

¹⁹Thielman J. van Braght, The Bloody Theatre (Scottdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1950), pp. 414-5

²⁰Williams, Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers, pp. 112-35.

²¹J. Loserth, "Hubmaier," ME, II, 862-3.

²²Cornelius Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1968), pp. 80-91.

the message to Emden in 1530. The movement toward adult baptism spread through the center of the Sacramentarian fellowships from Emden to Antwerp. In Hofmann's insistence on freedom of religion, on evidence of the fruit of the Spirit, on sanctification of life, on believer's baptism and nonresistance, essential contribution was made to strengthen Anabaptism.²³ Among his adherents was Obbe Philips, a later leader of Dutch Anabaptism.

Unfortunately Hofmann's preaching emphasized also the commonly accepted eschatological expectations. Convinced that the Holy Spirit fully compensated for any lack of education, Hofmann constructed an allegorical-spiritualist doctrine. Centering on the imminent end of the world, he was convinced that he was called to take a part as Elijah in the return of Christ.

After Hofmann's imprisonment other individuals came into places of leadership in the North, among them Jan Matthys and Jan van Leyden. Exploiting the chiliastic aspect of Hofmann's teaching, using spiritualistic interpretation of Scripture, and capitalizing on the intensified persecution as stimulus to whip up enthusiasm for action, they transformed a part of the Anabaptist movement into an Old Testament "Israel" with such features as 12 elders, armed resistance, and polygamy. The prophecies of these men finally led to the attempt to establish the "New Jerusalem" in Münster in 1534-35.²⁴

²³Christian Neff, "Hofmann, Melchior," ME, II, 784.

²⁴The Münster episode in Reformation history is well known. See Cornelius Krahn, "Munster Anabaptist," ME, III, 777-83 for a brief account and review of the literature about the Münsterites.

Recognizing the unscriptural teachings of the radical group were the brothers Obbe and Dirk Philips, who with Menno Simons a little later, were destined to become leaders of the peaceful northern Anabaptists. While Hofmann's followers had insisted that one might legitimately add to what the Bible gave as the content of God's revelation, these men repudiated the Münsterites, insisting that the Scriptures were the all-sufficient revelation of God, the indicator of His plan and will for men.²⁵ Having experienced spiritual rebirth through the study of the Scriptures, they insisted that the Scriptures be taken seriously and adequately interpreted. They took seriously the command to proclaim the message, so that the "wandering sheep" might be led into Christ's fold.

The defection of Obbe Philips, who had ordained his brother Dirk (ca. 1534) and baptized and ordained Menno Simons (ca. 1536 and 1537), was heartrending to the others. In his "Confession"²⁶ (ca. 1560) Obbe traces the rise of radical reform and the tragedy of the Münsterite revolution, and voices his despair over the deviousness of all attempts to establish a truly apostolic church. Having been caught up in the zeal of Hofmann's prophecies and seeing the extreme result of Münster, the question of ministerial authority became a hurdle for him.

After Obbe, the peaceful Anabaptists looked to his brother Dirk

²⁵Henry Poettcker, "The Anabaptist View of the Scriptures," Mennonite Life, XIX:3 (July 1964), 110.

²⁶Williams, Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers, p. 206-25.

and Menno Simons for leadership. Dirk, who had a good education as a Franciscan monk, became the leading theologian and dogmatician of this group.²⁷ He put much stress on the visible church. In the interest of protecting the brotherhood as the pure church of Christ, he demanded strict application of the ban and the subsequent avoidance, a reason for his writings being held in high esteem by the Old Order Amish.

Dirk Philips' Enchiridion (little "handbook" of 650 pages!) has been likened in Mennonitism to Melancthon's Loci communes within Lutheranism.²⁸ It contains writings as: Confession of Faith, Concerning the Incarnation, Knowledge of Jesus Christ, Knowledge of God, Apologia, Call of the Preacher, Loving Admonition (ban), the New Birth, Spiritual Restoration, and others. In the book on the church he names seven ordinances: pure doctrine (with emphasis on "correct ministers"), Scriptural use of the sacraments, washing the feet of the saints, separation (ban and avoidance), the command to love, obedience to the commands of Christ, suffering and persecution. Reflected throughout is a certain moralism and legalism which reflected also the personality of Dirk Philips.²⁹

This explains in part why another preacher and writer became the recognized leader of the Dutch Anabaptists. In Holland after 1545 the group came to be called "Men(n)ists" after Menno Simons, a name

²⁷N. van der Zijpp, "Dirk Philips," ME, II, 65.

²⁸Williams, Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers, p. 226. First published in 1564, an English translation from the German was made by A. B. Kolb (Elkhart, Ind., 1910).

²⁹van der Zijpp, "Dirk Philips," ME, II, 65.

which gradually developed into "Mennonist" and then "Mennonit" or "Mennonite."³⁰

Menno Simons (1496-1561), converted Catholic priest, prevented the collapse of the northern wing of the Anabaptist movement in the days of its greatest trial, and built it up on a strong Biblical foundation. As told in the autobiography of his conversion,³¹ Menno's questions about authority came in the second year of his priesthood at Pingjum, 1525, when he reflected on officiating at the Mass. No doubt influenced by the Sacramentists who interpreted the meaning of the Lord's Supper as being symbolic, he was led to read the New Testament. A second crisis came with the martyrdom of Sicke Freerks Snijder at Leeuwarden for being rebaptized (ca. 1530). Again Menno was led into a search of the Scriptures and came to the conviction that he had been deceived by the church, as well as that Luther and the other reformers were wrong in teaching infant baptism. A third crisis came for Menno with the Münster revolt, and the abortive efforts at self defense by a group of 300 Anabaptists near Bolsward in 1535, resulting in their death at the hands of the authorities. Seeing the willingness of these zealous, but misled people to give their lives for their faith, Menno, now priest at Witmarsum, felt keenly his own hypocrisy, and began to

³⁰Bender, "Anabaptist," ME, I, 114, and his "Mennonite," ME, III, 587. Interestingly, even the Swiss and South German Anabaptists who were never under the personal influence of Menno Simons took on his name in their group identification, whereas the Dutch finally rejected it in favor of "Doopsgezind."

³¹Menno Simons, The Complete Writings (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1956), pp. 668-74. This work will hereafter be cited as CW.

...preach publicly from the pulpit the word of true repentance, to point the people to the narrow path, and in the power of the Scripture openly to reprove all sin and wickedness, all idolatry and false worship, and to present the true worship; also the true baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the doctrine of Christ.³²

Menno's renunciation of Roman Catholicism occurred late in January, 1536. About a year later, following the urging of several Anabaptist brethren, he accepted the office of elder among the Anabaptists. Now began his years as a hunted preacher. This was his fate from 1536-1554, so that he wrote: "I could not find in all the country a cabin or hut in which my poor wife and our little children could put up in safety for a year or two."³³

In 1544 he was invited to theological discussion with John a Lasco, superintendent of the East Friesland churches. The purpose was to win Menno and his followers to the Reformed Church, evidence that he was known as the spokesman of the group. A 1545 decree of Countess Anna mentions the "Mennisten," designating the followers of Menno, further evidence that he was well known as an Anabaptist leader.³⁴

Menno preached in various places in Holland and northwest Germany, and wrote in defense of the faith of the Anabaptists. Particularly his Foundation of Christian Doctrine (1539)³⁵ was an attempt to restore the original Anabaptist concepts and principles, to acquaint the world with the solid Biblical foundation of the Dutch Anabaptist

³²Ibid., p. 671. ³³Ibid., p. 424.

³⁴Cornelius Krahn, "Menno Simons," ME, III, 580.

³⁵Menno Simons, CW, pp. 103-226.

Brethren, and to help his brethren and sisters develop a faith only on Jesus Christ. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11) appears as the front page motto on every book and pamphlet he wrote.

Christ-centeredness marks his theology. Discipleship (Nachfolge) or a fruitful Christian life were very strongly emphasized. But Menno's emphasis was also upon the church. True Christian living takes place within the congregation. His chief concern was the achievement of the true church of Jesus Christ or the body of Christ. Frequent references are 1 Cor. 12:13; 25-27, and Col. 1:18-24. The prerequisites for church membership are regeneration and willingness to bear the cross of Christ.

This focus on discipline gave rise to unhappy controversy during the last years of Menno's life. Whereas in the first years of the Anabaptist movement the focus was on recruitment and baptism, by the end of Menno's life a major concern was disciplined consolidation, and to what extent the faithful might properly associate with former members who had been banned, including spouses.³⁶

After Obbe Philips' defection in 1540, and the banning of Adam Pastor in 1547 for liberal Christological views,³⁷ rigorists Dirk

³⁶Williams, Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers, p. 261.

³⁷Krahn, "Menno Simons," ME, III, 581. Note that Menno also had an unorthodox view of the Incarnation, stressing Christ's divinity at the expense of His humanity. For Menno, Christ in the Incarnation passed through Mary's womb like a ray of sunshine through a glass of water without taking on any of his sinful flesh. See also Menno Simons, CW, pp. 427-440, and 785.

Philips and Leonard Bouwens favored shunning. Menno wavered, knowing the possibilities of misunderstanding, harshness and bitterness in applying the ban.³⁸ In 1557 he made a trip to Friesland to mediate between the rigorists and those more lenient. But his writings from that time³⁹ indicate that Menno identified more fully with the rigorists than the laxist or mild-banner waterlanders who became forerunners of the liberal Doopsgezinden. Still Menno insisted that the ban be used "with vigilant love" both for the sake of the sanctity of the church and the ultimate salvation of the wayward.⁴⁰

South Germany. Having considered briefly the beginnings of Anabaptism with Grebel in Switzerland, the move via Hofmann to the Netherlands and northern Europe where Menno Simons' leadership gave the group his name, we need to note the significance of Pilgram Marpeck, the most important writer of the German Anabaptists in the 16th century.⁴¹

Marpeck, who had a good education, was not a cleric, but a mine judge and engineer. From Tirol, Austria, he became an Anabaptist ca. 1528. He came to the Strassburg area in 1528. Here he became popular not only with the clergy like Capito, Bucer, and Blaurer, but as an engineer for the city. But public opinion soon changed, and in

³⁸Menno Simons, CW, p. 1043ff.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 1050-51 and 1060-63.

⁴⁰Williams, Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers, p. 262.

⁴¹H. S. Bender, "Pilgram Marpeck," ME, III, 491.

1532 he was driven out for contradicting the clergy, his rigorous Biblical defense of adult baptism, and other "heretical" ideas. Traveling, preaching, and writing from 1532-1544, he lived for several years in the Grisoms, moving to Augsburg in 1544 where he lived and worked as an engineer until his death in 1556.

Marpeck's significance lies in his writing, particularly three books which he authored in total or in part: the Bundesbezeugung (Baptism booklet) of 1542, the Testamentserläuterung (Testament Explanation),⁴² and the Verantwortung (Answer) to Schwenkfeld's Judicium (Critique) concerning the baptism booklet. Also his debates over baptism with Bucer in Strassburg sharpen the points of disagreement between the other Reformers and the Anabaptists.

Marpeck, who moved in the same areas to which the Swiss Brethren had fled, and Moravia, home of the Hutterites, must be seen as distinct from these groups. His attitude was less rigorous toward the ban, and he did not believe in the community of goods adopted by the Hutterites. Working for the reunion of the separated groups, he won only small numbers to his party, though the Anabaptist Synods at

⁴²Ibid., p. 498. This book of over 800 pages is a concordance listing Scripture passages around a variety of themes, showing how the Old and New Covenants differ, and how the Old Testament points beyond itself to the New and foreshadows the experiences of the New Covenant. Written sometime after 1544 it was prepared as a source book to prove and strengthen with the Bible, the positions taken in the Verantwortung. William Klassen, "The Hermeneutics of Pilgram Marpeck" (unpublished Th. D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1960) examines this work in detail. See also his "The Relation of the Old and New Covenants in Pilgram Marpeck's Theology," MQR, XL:2 (April 1966) pp. 97-111.

Strassburg 1554-5 may have grown out of his efforts.⁴³

Jan J. Kiwiet has called attention to an origin for the Marpeck group independent of the Swiss Brethren, with Hans Denk, the "contemplative Anabaptist," as their founder. Consequently he suggests that in addition to the radical and moderate type of Anabaptist, there is this third type which also originated free of Thomas Muntzer, although it shared with him the eschatological and spiritual interest common to many theologians in South Germany. He summarizes:

Within the field of Anabaptist history it is very interesting to notice the origin and development of these two main movements within Anabaptism, one having the Scriptures as the principle, the other having love and obedience as its center. Both discovered the free church from a different angle, one from Bible study and the other from theological considerations. These two types of Anabaptists provide a Scriptural as well as a theological foundation for the free church principles.⁴⁴

The Essence of Anabaptist Hermeneutics

As already noted, attempts to classify Anabaptism have focused on a distinctive view of the church. Taking seriously the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers led them to reject the corpus christianum not only of the Catholic church, but also of Luther and Zwingli, and stress the corpus Christi of committed believers. The issue was one of authority. They found their sole authority in the Scriptures in

⁴³Bender, "Pilgram Marpeck," ME, III, 501. See also his "Strassbourg Conferences," ME, IV, 643.

⁴⁴Jan J. Kiwiet quoted by H. S. Bender in "Pilgram Marpeck," ME, III, 501. The quotation is based on Kiwiet's "Pilgram Marpeck sein Kreis und seine Theologie" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Zürich, 1955).

that here were laid down the convictions of the earliest Christians about Jesus and who Jesus was.

The centrality of Christ figures prominently in the problem of understanding. Taking the approach of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips as normative for evangelical Anabaptism, the starting point is Christ. The Old Testament is seen as the figure pointing to Christ, containing the promises that find their fulfilment in Him. Because the New Testament presents the reality of that which is only sign in the Old Testament it takes precedence over the Old. The text of Scripture must be taken seriously, but one must interpret according to the sense and spirit of Christ.⁴⁵

Contrasting the Anabaptist hermeneutic with several other points of view can be helpful. Against the Catholic church, with the other reformers, they saw the authority in the Scriptures and not in tradition. Their writings are full of accusations against "popish works." Also in contrast to the Catholic sacramental-hierarchical view of how men experience God, the Anabaptists, perhaps more than the other reformers, recovered the horizontal dimension of the congregation, the Gemeinde, "the Little Church, the local family of God."⁴⁶

Against the kind of Christian humanism represented by Erasmus, who envisaged a reform of the whole human society achieved by the rule

⁴⁵Poettcker, "The Anabaptist View of the Scriptures," pp. 110-11.

⁴⁶Wilhelm Pauck, The Heritage of the Reformation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950) p. 166, citing Theodore O. Wedel, The Coming Great Church (New York: Macmillan, 1946), p. 60.

of reason and inspired by the newly discovered norm of primitive Christianity and classical society, they minimized the role of reason in Christian faith and insisted that all that is required of the Christian is unqualified obedience to scriptural norms. "Where the eye of the humanist was centered on man, the eye of the Anabaptist was centered on God...the humanist was a scholar, the Anabaptist a disciple."⁴⁷

The Anabaptists accepted the Reformation principle that the Scriptures could be the sole authority for the church. But whereas for Luther and Zwingli, this principle was interpreted in a limited sense as applying to man's personal relationship to God and not to his relationship in society at large,

...the Anabaptists insisted that the principle was basic to man's personal relationship to God (justification by faith), his place in the believing community (baptism, Lord's Supper, discipline), and for his relationship to the unbelieving world (discipleship, witness).⁴⁸

Robert Friedmann⁴⁹ has pointed to a different set of presuppositions of the Anabaptists from the other Protestant bodies, in that Protestantism rests on a revived Augustinianism with its key concepts of original sin, bondage of the will, and predestination. The Anabaptists did not know Augustine, and of Luther and Zwingli and Calvin only a little. Consequently in their writings the standard ideas of Protes-

⁴⁷Robert Kreider, "Anabaptism and Humanism," MQR, XXVI:2 (April 1952), 141.

⁴⁸Walter Klaassen, "The Anabaptist View of Scriptures," Menno-nite Life, XIX:3 (July 1964), 113.

⁴⁹Friedmann, "The Essence of Anabaptist Faith," MQR, XLI:1 (January 1967), 6, 14, 17.

tant theology, such as reconciliation, justification, and salvation, are largely absent. Whereas Luther's starting point was the Epistle to the Romans (and the experience of one's being lost in sin and the subsequent availability of God's unmerited grace), for the Anabaptist Brethren the major point of reference was the Gospels.⁵⁰ That man's salvation is by faith alone was not denied by the Anabaptists, but Anabaptism begins at the uplifting experience of conversion, called in the Gospel of John (3:3) the new birth or rebirth in the Spirit. The existential rather than the theological character of Anabaptist faith led to seeking ways to translate this conversion into forms of living.⁵¹

So Augsburgur has summarized:

If Luther's hermeneutical approach was anthropological (beginning with man's need for forgiveness) and Calvin's approach was theological (beginning with God's sovereignty and man's election) the Anabaptist approach could be described as Christological (beginning with the emphasis on Christ's call to a "new creature" expressed in discipleship).⁵²

In relation to the Spiritualists it is important to note that the Anabaptists too had a lively sense of the Spirit. In fact, for them truth was seen as given by the Holy Spirit. But remembering the excesses of Münster, Menno Simons' rule by which the true church can be

⁵⁰William Klassen, "The Relation of the Old and New Covenants in Pilgram Marpeck's Theology," MQR, XL:2 (April 1966) 101, notes that Marpeck is an exception to this, quoting most often from John and Paul, while the Anabaptists lived primarily in the Synoptics and James.

⁵¹Friedmann, "The Essence of Anabaptist Faith," p. 6.

⁵²Myron S. Augsburgur, Principles of Biblical Interpretation in Mennonite Theology (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1957), p. 20.

identified included: "where the Spirit, Word, sacraments, and life of Christ are found..."⁵³ Menno was willing to trust the power of the Holy Spirit to give new light. But the Word proclaimed was to be checked in the meeting. Thus the setting for articulation of the Spirit's truth was brotherly discussion. For Anabaptism, the locus of the living Word was not in an office or left to individual insight and conscience, but in the congregation.⁵⁴

In the Reply to Gellius Faber, Menno Simons outlines the signs by which the church is distinguished as: 1) the unadulterated doctrine of His holy and divine Word, 2) the scriptural use of the sacraments of Christ, baptism and the Lord's Supper, 3) obedience to the holy Word, the pious, Christian life, 4) sincere and unfeigned love of one's neighbor, 5) that the name, will, Word, and ordinance of Christ are confidently confessed in the face of all cruelty, tyranny, tumult, fire, sword, and violence of the world, and 6) the pressing cross of Christ borne for the sake of his testimony and Word.⁵⁵

H. S. Bender's definitive statement on "The Anabaptist Vision" suggests three constitutive elements of Anabaptist-Mennonite faith: 1) Discipleship is the essence of Christianity. Inner faith is to be evidenced by a transformation of life. 2) Voluntary church membership. Corollary to this was the insistence on the separation of church from

⁵³Menno Simons, CW, p. 754.

⁵⁴Franklin Littell, A Tribute to Menno Simons (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1961) pp. 59-60.

⁵⁵Menno Simons, CW, pp. 739-42.

the world. 3) The ethic of love and nonresistance is to be applied in all human relationships.⁵⁶

The term Nachfolge (discipleship) may be seen as the key theological conception of the Anabaptists as the term "grace" became in Lutheran theology. For preaching in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition this has meant that the end of preaching is the edification of the church and the enlargement of her witness.

B. MENNONITE PREACHING

The Early Anabaptist Preaching

The Sources. What are the sources for our knowledge of Anabaptist preaching? Few sermons have been preserved to the present as they were not written and read but given ex tempore. However, Cornelius Krahn reminds us that the writings of the early Anabaptists can easily be used as "collections" of sermons, that parts of these writings were presented in many preachings and exhortations, and consequently, convey basic information about their preaching practice and understanding.⁵⁷ Let us look briefly at writings of several Anabaptist leaders which reflect their preaching interest and concerns.

Michael Sattler, Anabaptist leader and martyr of South Germany, was a member of the Zürich group and reflects the early Swiss Brethren

⁵⁶Bender, "The Anabaptist Vision," pp. 42-52.

⁵⁷Based on personal correspondence between Cornelius Krahn, Director, Mennonite Historical Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas, and the writer.

thought. Sattler wanted to build a church of Christ, pure, God-fearing, and genuine, cleansed by the blood of Christ to be holy and blameless before God and men. His brethren were God's obedient children who had separated from the world.

The seven articles of the Schleithem Confession of 1527 reveal Sattler's zeal and warmth and devotion. The "Confession" also gives evidence of the concern for the office of preaching during persecution so that congregations should never lack the firm hand of a leader. The pastor's office shall be

...to read, to admonish and teach, to warn, to discipline, to ban in the church, to lead out in prayer for the advancement of all the brethren and sisters, to lift up the bread when it is to be broken, and in all things to see to the body of Christ, in order that it may be built up and developed....⁵⁸

"An Early Anabaptist Tract on Hermeneutics," attributed to Sattler,⁵⁹ is an essay not only on hermeneutics, but suggests the place of preaching in creating Christian faith and the church. The subtitle includes: "How the Holy Spirit with His Gifts Precedes and Follows and Accomplishes His Work, First through Believing the Proclamation." In the form of a manual, the pamphlet outlines the procedures: 1) Proclaim the word of repentance and faith. 2) Where the Holy Spirit kindles faith, water baptism is administered. 3) Those who have been recipients of Holy Spirit baptism and water baptism are then taught to

⁵⁸Michael Sattler, "Schleithem Confession of Faith" (1527), in Harry Emerson Fosdick (ed.) Great Voices of the Reformation (New York: Random House, 1952), p. 290.

⁵⁹J. C. Wenger (trans. and ed.), "An Early Anabaptist Tract on Hermeneutics," MQR, XLII:1 (January 1968), 22-44.

keep the teachings of Christ.

Melchior Hofmann, whose provocative sermon at Emden in 1530 led to the baptism of 300 believers,⁶⁰ soon thereafter published his Ordonnanti Godts⁶¹ which Krahn considers contains the basic message Hofmann presented at Emden.⁶² The Ordonnanti (ordinance of God) contains the basic challenge of the Great Commission.⁶³ Supported by numerous Scripture references, it deals with the essence and calling of the church of Christ. The commission goes out from Christ to his messengers to unite those in darkness to Christ through repentance and the symbol of baptism. Those reborn join the church of Christ in the covenant of baptism. In this close fellowship of Christ and the church, discipleship and discipline are practiced.

Krahn describes how as the crucial point in a service was reached, Hofmann climaxed his preaching by calling on those who were ready and willing to seal their faith in Jesus Christ by becoming Bundgenossen (fellows of the covenant) in his church. These then proceeded to the adjacent Geerkamer in order to be baptized upon the confession of their faith.⁶⁴

Menno Simons also preached on the basis of the Great Commission, but not with Hofmann's spiritualist-eschatological leanings.

⁶⁰Obbe Philips, "A Confession," in Williams, Spiritualist and Anabaptist Writers, p. 208.

⁶¹Kr⁶²Williams, Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers, pp. 184-203.

⁶²Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism, p. 95.

⁶³Matt. 28:18-20.

⁶⁴Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism, p. 96.

The Bible speaks for itself. The Christian is to avoid speculations.

In the Foundation of Christian Doctrine (1539) he wrote on the vocation and doctrine of preachers:

This command and word, I say, Christ commanded all true messengers and preachers to observe, saying, Preach the gospel. He does not say, Preach the doctrines and commands of men, preach councils and customs, preach glosses and opinions of the learned. He says, Preach the gospel. Teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you. Matt. 28:20.⁶⁵

The urgency of preaching, growing out of the conviction that the whole world, "lords, princes, learned and unlearned people" are so far from Christ Jesus and eternal life is expressed in this classic statement by Menno:

Therefore we preach, as much as is possible, both by day and by night, in houses and in fields, in forests and wastes, hither and yon, at home or abroad, in prisons and dungeons, in water and in fire, on the scaffold and on the wheel, before lords and princes, through mouth and pen, with possessions and blood, with life and death...for we feel his living fruit and moving power in our hearts ...We could wish that we might save all mankind from the jaws of hell, free them from the chains of their sins, and by the gracious help of God add them to Christ by the Gospel of his peace.⁶⁶

In days when many people could not read the Bible but could hear the preacher, preaching was seen as the means by which God made His Divine will known among men. By preaching, men were persuaded to repent, accept God's offer of salvation by faith, and be baptized into the church. Marpeck stated, "It is undeniable and irrefutable that this is the first through which the church came into being and still

⁶⁵Menno Simons, CW, p. 165.

⁶⁶Menno Simons, Opera Omnia Theologica (Amsterdam: Veen, 1961), p. 223, cited by C. J. Dyck, "The Role of Preaching in Anabaptist Tradition," Mennonite Life, XVII:1 (January 1962), 22.

does, namely the proclamation of the Holy Gospel of Christ."⁶⁷ So preaching of God's Word was given the primary place in the order of the church, with the sacraments following after preaching: baptism when a man believes the Word, and the Lord's Supper when, through faith in baptism he has become a member of the church of Christ.

The Function of Preaching. To begin to look at the writings of these early Anabaptists as collections of preachings, is to ask the question: What did they see as the function of preaching? What was the purpose of the sermon? Was it to restore the church of Christ, to bring the true church into being? Obviously it is not enough to cite the powerful preaching of a Balthaser Hubmaier in the early years of the evangelical movement, or the fervent appeal of a Melchior Hofmann to baptism, or even of Menno Simons on the Great Commission. For after the first years of appeal to baptism, upon witness and outreach, increasing attention also came to be given to the consolidation, the discipline of "the pure church."

With a view of the priesthood of all believers that in effect nearly equated baptism with ordination, there was also a danger.⁶⁸ Whereas Luther had become increasingly skeptical of the ability of the local congregation to call the right man, and following his return to

⁶⁷Walter Klaassen, "The Preacher and Preaching," Concern, No. 9 (1961), 30.

⁶⁸Luther had set forth the priesthood of all believers' concept: "The fact is that our baptism consecrates us all without exception, and makes us all priests." See "Appeal to the German Nobility" (1520), in John Dillenberger (ed.) Martin Luther (Garden City: Doubleday, 1961), p. 21.

Wartburg in 1522 favored the call to preach coming via training at Wittenberg and orderly placement by the authorities, the Anabaptists insisted that since they had a church of believers, everybody was, not only potentially but actually, called to preach. Whereas for Luther the church was where the Word is rightly preached and the sacraments properly administered, for the Anabaptists the church was where there is faith and discipline. Luther preached because many in his congregation were "name Christians" only and needed to be won. The Anabaptist church assumed that it consisted of believers only; therefore what was needed was not "gospel" but "law." Conversion gave essential knowledge of God's will. Henceforth they needed simply to be reprimanded, exhorted, disciplined.

Following up this difference between the Reformers' understanding of the nature of the sermon and that of the Anabaptists, C. J. Dyck has pointed to exhortation as the central motif of most Anabaptist preaching.⁶⁹ For Luther and Calvin the sermon was verbum Dei, God speaking to the people. "God speaks through the preacher," said Luther. "When we preach we are passive rather than active. God is speaking through us, and it is a divine working."⁷⁰ The Anabaptists saw the sermon as a witness of one brother before the others, of what God had done. Though the contention that the Anabaptists saw the ser-

⁶⁹Dyck, "The Role of Preaching....," pp. 23-4.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 23, citing Martin Luther, Werke (Weimarer Ausgabe), XLIII, 381. See also Wilhelm Pauck, "The Ministry in the Time of the Continental Reformation," in H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (eds.) The Ministry in Historical Perspectives (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), pp. 112-5.

mon as human must be seen in light of their understanding that it was indeed also a tool of the Spirit for the salvation and growth of the hearers. So Menno Simons wrote:

The surest and best fruits are so to preach the Word of God in power that many are born of God by it, are turned to God, are led to fear and love Him, to serve their neighbors, to restrain flesh and blood, to believe on Jesus Christ with all the heart, and tremble at His Word; doing nothing contrary to it, truly worshiping God and conforming their whole life ^{or} walk to His Spirit, word, and example; for such fruits remain.

Yet Dyck is undoubtedly right in pointing out that doctrine and theology was subordinated to admonition. If, as Friedmann points out, the starting point for Anabaptist faith is conversion and the new birth, the problem was not lack of knowledge, but lack of obedience. So the function of the minister was to plead, to urge his listeners to repentance, to love, to joy, to peace. In the early Dutch tradition and in North Germany, the preacher was most commonly referred to as Vermaner (Vermahner), and the meeting place as a Vermaning.⁷² The title calls attention to a function of the preacher as a challenger, admonisher, exhorter. This emphasis upon admonition was based upon the Scriptures⁷³ and the examples of the apostles. Dyck concludes,

...except in the early years of the movement...the sermon was used to teach and exhort. Those who remained disobedient were disciplined. The issues were posed in terms of the will. They were, of course, Arminian...While it is true that this emphasis upon exhortation with its inevitable moralistic precipice may have been the result of a weak doctrine of grace on the part of some, with

⁷¹Menno Simons, CW, p. 653.

⁷²Cornelius Krahn, "Vermaner" and "Vermaning" in ME, IV, 815.

⁷³1 Thess. 5:11, 14; Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 4:13; 6:2; 2 Tim. 4:21; Titus 1:9; and 2 Peter 1:12.

many it was the corollary of a deep understanding of the nature of conversion...The Christian life consisted not so much in knowing as in believing and doing.⁷⁴

The Authentication. We are now ready to draw some conclusions regarding the authentication of the Anabaptist preaching. The Anabaptist leaders defended themselves against the charges that "whoever preaches without authorization is an enthusiast," repudiating any suggestion that they had undertaken to do this of their own initiative. They testify continually of being sent by God to preach. The preacher, they said, must be called by God. Gabriel Weinberger wrote in a letter to the Council of Regensburg in 1540 that true churches of Christ did not elect a preacher and servant of the Gospel unless he was first "called by God and driven by the Holy Spirit."⁷⁵ Only the man whom God has called has the right to preach.

So Menno Simons, who came to Anabaptism through a deep personal crisis of encounter with the Scriptures, goes to considerable effort in his writings to clarify the vocation (calling) of the ministers. In his Foundation of Christian Doctrine (1539) a major section is devoted to "The Vocation (commission) of the Preachers," pointing to 1) the call of God alone, and 2) the call "by means of the pious (Acts 1:23-26).⁷⁶ In the Brief and Clear Confession (1544) to the reformer

⁷⁴Dyck, "The Role of Preaching....," p. 24. See also Alvin J. Beachy, "Theology and Practice of Anabaptist Worship," MQR, XL:3 (July 1966), 168-9.

⁷⁵Klaassen, "The Preacher and Preaching," p. 29.

⁷⁶Menno Simons, CW, pp. 159-64.

John a Lasco, he devotes section two to "The Calling of Ministers," as "sent of Christ Jesus as He is sent of the Father."⁷⁷ And in the Reply to Gellius Faber (1554) is found Menno's longest exposition on "The Mission or Vocation of Preachers," a vocation "issuing from God, by means of man," including the account of his own conversion.⁷⁸

Impressive about these 16th century preachers is the burning conviction that they were chosen and sent by the God who was Creator of all, the God who had called Abraham and Moses and David and Isaiah and Jeremiah and the apostles. This same God had chosen them. His call had once again been heard in the midst of human affairs, and when God Almighty calls, what can a man do but listen? Weak and sinful, incapable as they were, they were overwhelmed with the wonder and mystery of it. And they went out with the conviction that they had a living and vital part to play in the great purpose of the God who had revealed himself in Jesus Christ.⁷⁹

In addition to authority through the call of God and the church, the authentication of preaching came from the Scriptures. The Anabaptists insisted that the test of true preaching is whether it is Scriptural or not. So Menno Simons, writing on "The Doctrine of the Preacher" pleads for "The Gospel, the Word of God, preached without admixture in the power of the Spirit."⁸⁰ Or again, "Nothing may be

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 440-54.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 643-81.

⁷⁹Klaassen, "The Preacher and the Preaching," pp. 29-30.

⁸⁰Menno Simons, CW, p. 164.

preached in Christ's kingdom, house, and church except her King and husband's own commands and words...."⁸¹

Recognizing the danger of subjectivism in preaching, the Scriptures were seen as the norm by which man can test his faith and conduct. Some Anabaptists emphasized the Bible as a witness to revelation and made a distinction between Christ as the Word of God, and the Bible as a written record. But it was a Christocentric view of the Scriptures under the scheme of the Old and New Covenants that dominated. Whenever the Old and New Testaments are in apparent conflict, as in the case of the believer's participation in warfare, the Old Testament was always subordinated to the New.⁸² The text of Scripture must be taken seriously, but one must interpret according to the sense and spirit of Christ.

If Anabaptist writing is any clue to their preaching, we can assume it was heavily laden with Biblical quotations. The imagery and terminology centered upon the Bible. Titles given the preacher included Diener am Wort (Servant of the Word), Diener zum Buch (Servant of the Book), and Leerar/Lehrer (Teacher).⁸³

But lest we get the impression that they were enslaved by the written Word, it must be noted that for the Anabaptists Spirit and text of Scripture were inextricably tied together. The teaching of the Scripture was inseparable from the witness of the Spirit. Salvation

⁸¹Ibid., p. 165.

⁸²Beachy, "Theology and Practice of Anabaptist Worship," p. 168.

⁸³H. S. Bender, "Preacher," ME, IV, 214.

was not to be found through Spirit or Word alone, but through their vital interrelationship. They believed that the working of the Holy Spirit directed upon the human heart must be added to the objective and preached Word. The inner Word was not understood in the sense of an inner inspiration, but as the illuminating work of God. Word without Spirit was a dead letter. The life-giving Spirit of God turns the written and proclaimed Word into God's Word.⁸⁴

Peter J. Klassen has further pointed out that in their view of the church it was the indwelling of the Spirit that became the basis for and bond of fellowship. Those who had the Spirit were one, one with God and one with each other. The resulting dynamic community centered in the Spirit, and was bound together by living relationships, first with the center, then with each other. It became the conviction of the Anabaptists that the locus of the living Word was the congregation. Each believer had something to gain from, and contribute to, the shared life of the congregation. Anabaptists believed that the Holy Spirit expressed Himself through the consensus of the believing community.⁸⁵ So the Spirit authenticated preaching, but also the brotherly admonition of the preacher, as Menno Simons wrote:

If I err in some things, which by the grace of God I hope is not the case, I pray everyone for the Lord's sake, lest I be put to shame, that if anyone has a stronger and more convincing truth

⁸⁴Wilhelm Wiswedel, "Bible, Inner and Outer Word," ME, I, p. 327; see also W. Wiswedel, "The Inner and Outer Word," MQR, XXVI:3 (July 1952), 171 ff.

⁸⁵Peter J. Klassen, "The Anabaptist View of the Holy Spirit," in Cornelius J. Dyck (ed.) The Witness of the Holy Spirit (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite World Conference, 1967), pp. 246-7.

He through brotherly exhortation and instruction might assist me. I desire with my heart to accept it if he is right. Deal with me according to the intention of the Spirit and the Word of Christ.⁸⁶

This leads us to another element in the authentication of preaching. The fruit of the Spirit must be evident in the preacher's own life, even as the fruit of the Spirit is the final authentication in the life of the believer. Reflecting on his own life as a young priest, and the lives of his friends,⁸⁷ and from what he saw of the life even of many of the Protestant clergy,⁸⁸ Menno was appalled at the motivations reflected in the "easy, carnal lives" of so many preachers.⁸⁹ In a section on "The Conduct of Preachers" he contends that it is not enough for a man to speak much of the Word of the Lord, but "it must also be verified by devout and unblamable conduct."⁹⁰ In a scathing paragraph on those who change the office into "sinful splendor" and "princely glory," he reminds the reader that the humble office of a true preacher is "...an office of Christian service. If rightly served it is full of labor, poverty, trouble, care, reproach, misery, sorrow, dross, and pain."⁹¹

So Menno summarizes the calling of the preacher and those things which ultimately authenticate the preaching:

Nobody can be a preacher called and well pleasing to God, a servant in the Lord's house and church, without the Holy Spirit which works in all true Christ-believers, nor without regeneration which transforms the heart from earthly to heavenly things through faith, nor without unfeigned love which seeks nothing but the

⁸⁶Menno Simons, CW, p. 65.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 668.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 162, 166.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 168.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 169.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 172.

praise of God and the salvation of one's neighbor, nor without the blessed pure Word which cuts and cleaves without respect of person, high⁹² or low, nor without the pious, unblamable life which is of God.

What authenticates the preaching? The preacher's call by God and the church (which is an avenue of the Spirit's work), the Scriptures interpreted in the gathered fellowship (again an avenue of the Spirit's work), yes, and the preacher's life if faithful to the Word and Spirit. For this is part of the Anabaptist understanding of Nachfolge (discipleship) and Gehorsam (obedience), i.e., the acceptance of Christ's leadership and the spirit which permeates His teachings.

Finally, we must add a note about "world" in authenticating preaching. Robert Friedmann has elaborated on the Anabaptist "doctrine of the two worlds."⁹³ Though not articulated as a theology, Friedmann has demonstrated how a "kingdom theology" was always implied in Anabaptist faith and preaching. Based on the Synoptic Gospels it was the view that the present kingdom of Christ is being established in the midst of and alongside the kingdom of this world. This "kingdom theology" is concerned with the concrete, life in the here and now. And life in the here and now is not individualistic. It includes the brethren, the neighbor, and even the enemy. But only by witnessing to the kingdom of Light in which the attitudes and acts of love, forgiveness, self-surrender, and not hating even one's own persecutors (Sermon

⁹²Ibid., p. 681.

⁹³Robert Friedmann, "The Doctrine of the Two Worlds," in Hersberger, op. cit., pp. 105-118. See also Friedmann, "The Essence of Anabaptist Faith," MQR, XLI:1 (January 1967), 5-24.

on the Mount) reign, can this kingdom ever become full reality.

That persecution quenched this missionary zeal, and consolidation of the faithful through exhortation and rigid discipline led to a formalism and traditionalism in later generations, does not erase the significance of the vision of these people who took Nachfolge Christi with utmost seriousness as the way of life even in this world.

Developments in Mennonite Preaching

We must now briefly call attention to some of the developments in Mennonite preaching in the intervening centuries. Whereas the basic strand of preaching in the 16th century was Biblical, during the 17th century this was modified, by the defense of orthodoxy in thought, dress, and social relationships with the primary appeal being made not to Scriptures but to tradition.⁹⁴ This is understandable in light of the fact that the Mennonites did not have theological schools, being mostly committed to the lay ministry.

"Liberal" and "Traditional" Groups. From the mid-18th century on the practices in relation to the ministry of the urban Dutch Mennonites and the closely related Northwest German urban Mennonites developed differently from the rural Prussian, Polish, and later Russian churches, as well as the rural South German, Swiss and French groups. The Dutch urban churches developed a pattern of a single paid and trained pastor. But the earlier Anabaptist pattern as well as that of

⁹⁴Dyck, "The Role of Preaching," p. 25.

the rural Mennonite churches in all European countries, was that of the threefold and plural unpaid and untrained ministry with one congregational elder or a district elder, several ministers (preachers), and several deacons.⁹⁵

Among the Dutch Mennonites, interest in theological education for the ministers dates back to 1680 with Galenus Abrahamsz de Haan giving training to several young men, who continued their studies at the Remonstrant Seminary upon his death. The Amsterdam Mennonite Theological Seminary was founded in 1735, with the first two professors being philosophers. The Amsterdam Seminary has been characterized by liberal Christian thought, and by a strong interest in Mennonite history, but with an ecumenical spirit. The Dutch Mennonites are represented in the Dutch Ecumenical Council, and send delegates to the World Council of Churches assembly meetings. At present very few Dutch congregations do not have a theologically trained minister. Nearly all ministers have attended the University of Amsterdam and the Mennonite Theological Seminary.⁹⁶

A striking contrast to the developments among the Dutch Mennonites may be seen in several Anabaptist groups such as the Amish and Hutterites. Since these very conservative and tradition-oriented groups "froze" patterns of worship and preaching from 300 years ago,

⁹⁵Bender, "The History of the Conception of Minister in the Anabaptist-Mennonite Brotherhood," (paper read at Goshen College Biblical Seminary, December, 1961), p. 1.

⁹⁶N. van der Zijpp, "Amsterdam Mennonite Theological Seminary," ME, I, 108-10; see also his "Netherlands," ME, III, 835ff.

they become a kind of laboratory to study earlier forms of Mennonite preaching. The Amish and Hutterite groups come out of the Swiss-South German background. A rigid discipline, the use of the ban, exhortation and admonition have been strong in these groups. They share an anti-education bias and separation from the world emphasis.

John Hostetler, Amish researcher, has given an excellent and accurate description of Amish preaching on a given Sunday by the several ministers as consisting of: 1) Anfang or introductory sermon, 2) Es schwere Deel or main sermon, and 3) Zeugniss or testimonies to the main sermon by other ministers present or lay members as requested by the one who preached.⁹⁷ Obedience to parents is one of the most expounded themes in Amish preaching. Obedience in family relations and in expanded kinship relations becomes a sacred life principle and means of control. The Amish understood Nachfolge (discipleship) as commitment to the love community.⁹⁸ Separation from the world continues to be a strong theme as this writer has heard expressed in preaching in the Hutchinson, Kansas Amish community: "Wir müssen nicht gute mixers sein, Wir müssen gute separators sein," (exposition of 2 Corinthians 6:17).

Friedmann has pointed to several unique features of the Hutterite worship and preaching, the Taufreden, standardized baptismal sermons dating back to 1584 and perhaps as early as Peter Walpot

⁹⁷ John A. Hostetler, Amish Society (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1963), p. 105.

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 17, 319.

(1565-78); the preservation and use of the 250-300 handwritten sermons which go back to the Ehrenpreis period of 1630 to 1660/5; and the preference for "sharp" preaching which demands unreserved obedience to God's Word, rather than the "soft" sermons which soothe but do not challenge. The preference for preaching of these written sermons from an earlier period appears to be based on the view that they are more authentic in that they have come out of a time of persecution.⁹⁹ The Hutterites in their communal life also still practice das Gebet, or daily prayer hour at evening, representing the early Anabaptist Zusammenkommen or meeting. This includes prayer, Bible reading, and simple exposition of Scripture, to admonish and strengthen in the daily struggle against "worldly" temptations.¹⁰⁰

The Mennonite Church. The Mennonite Church, sometimes called "Old Mennonite," is the oldest (founded 1683) and largest (membership 92,047 in 1967)¹⁰¹ Mennonite body in North America. Several characteristics and studies relating to preaching in this group must be mentioned. Approximately three-fourths of their membership live in the states east of the Mississippi, the ethnic background being Swiss-South German. The history of this body in the United States can be divided into three periods: 1) the Colonial Period (until 1800) con-

⁹⁹Robert Friedmann, "Hutterite Worship and Preaching," MQR, XL:1 (January 1966), 11.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 6-7.

¹⁰¹Mennonite Yearbook and Directory (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House), LIX (1968), 44.

tinuing European patterns, 2) the Middle Period (1800-1880) with strong influences from without; and 3) the Modern Period (1880 to the present) beginning with the so-called "Great Awakening" in American Mennonitism under John F. Funk and John S. Coffman, emphasizing first the call "back to Menno Simons," and, more recently, the call "back to the Swiss Brethren" (Grebel, Marpeck) and what they stood for.¹⁰²

In coming to this country the Swiss-German immigrants found a world of toleration. With no "suffering for the faith," what should be the function of an earnest Christian, of a witness for Christ? Being largely farmers, with little interest in education, they generally maintained a strong position of nonconformity to the world. The ideals included simplicity in life, and nonparticipation in civic-political activities. Worship and preaching took on a formalism, maintaining a traditional heritage with rejection of outside influences. However, Friedmann has documented the influence of German Pietism via books of sermons and the devotional literature of Willem Wynands (d. 1658), Jakob Denner (1659-1746), and Johannes Deknatel (1698-1759), or the influence of Methodist Pietism and the revivals of the 19th century. Friedmann sums up the way of Mennonitism in America as the subsequent trends of formalism, pietism, secularism, and requickening of the heritage of old.¹⁰³

The growth of confidence in education and its value for the

¹⁰²John C. Wenger, Glimpses of Mennonite History (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1940), p. 46.

¹⁰³Robert Friedmann, Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries (Goshen, Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, 1949), pp. 224-30.

cause of the church has been marked during the 20th century. Two four-year colleges, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, and Eastern Mennonite College, Harrisonburg, Virginia, and a junior college, Hesston College, Hesston, Kansas, have had extraordinary growth in recent years. An important feature at these colleges has been the annual "Minister's Week" when the ministers from the area and district conference come to the campus for lectures and workshops. Change from the lay ministry to trained salaried ministers has also been taking place with the establishment of Goshen College Biblical Seminary (since 1933) and now affiliated with Mennonite Biblical Seminary in the Associated Mennonite Seminaries at Elkhart, Indiana, and the addition of Bachelor of Religion and Bachelor of Theology degrees (six year program) at Eastern Mennonite College.

It should also be noted that the work of John Horsch, and Harold S. Bender, who was the president of the Goshen Seminary, in building up the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen, Indiana, has had a phenomenal influence in recovery of the "Anabaptist vision" among the past two generations of Mennonite students, many of whom are now preaching in the Mennonite Church.

Two studies in worship and preaching in the Mennonite Church should be mentioned. "Mennonite Preaching," by Roy H. Umble, was a study of eleven representative ministers from 1864-1944, which included the main transitional period from lay to trained ministry.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴Roy H. Umble, "Mennonite Preaching, 1864-1944" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, 1949).

Paul M. Miller's study of the relationship between Mennonite theology and worship included a study of twenty-one sample congregations in the Indiana-Michigan Conference. His findings related to preaching indicated that on the basis of time given and placement in the service, the sermon was obviously regarded as the central and most essential experience in worship, that sixteen of the twenty-one sermons were exposition of Scripture type sermons, and that the majority of the sermons attempted to admonish worshipers how to live.¹⁰⁵

In completing this brief survey of preaching in the Mennonite Church, reference needs also to be made to the 1965 publication of a collection of 26 contemporary sermons, From the Mennonite Pulpit. These were submitted by pastors on request for this purpose. The total number submitted showed a special emphasis in the area of mission and Christian living. The discipleship emphasis on behavior as a fruit of Christian faith could have been expected. The strong sense of mission which has come to characterize Mennonite thought in the past forty years is related to this rediscovery of early Anabaptism as intensely evangelistic before persecution drove the movement underground. So editor Paul Erb observes, "In this century the faith for Mennonites has been something not only to preserve, but also to propagate."¹⁰⁶

The General Conference. To complete this historical survey on

¹⁰⁵Paul M. Miller, "An Investigation of the Relationship Between Mennonite Theology and Mennonite Worship" (unpublished Th. D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, 1961).

¹⁰⁶Paul Erb (ed.) From the Mennonite Pulpit (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1965), pp. 3-4.

Mennonite preaching and give background to Chapter II which will focus on "Preaching in the General Conference," we need to call attention to a major development in the General Conference, the interest in higher education.

The General Conference grew out of the John H. Oberholtzer schism from the Mennonite Church in 1847 in Pennsylvania over progressive innovations into church life, as adoption of a written constitution, liberalized dress code, Sunday School and mission work. The General Conference was organized at West Point, Iowa, in 1860 with three congregations represented. Other congregations east of the Mississippi joined, as well as most of the Prussian-Russian Mennonite immigrants who came in the 1870's and 1880's, to settle in the midwest plains states and Canada. Also the Russian Mennonite immigrants who came to Canada in the 1920's and 1940's largely joined the General Conference, though a significant percentage of Russian-Mennonite (Low German ethnic group) belong to the Mennonite Brethren Church.¹⁰⁷

Today in the General Conference, outside of a few rural communities in Canada, almost all congregations have salaried or at least partially supported ministers, with a large majority having theological training.

Interest in education was not only a key factor in the beginning of the General Conference but has shaped preaching significantly

¹⁰⁷The Mennonite Brethren Church grew out of an 1860 schism in the Mennonite settlements of South Russia, with emphasis upon the conversion experience and baptism by immersion. The Mennonite Brethren Church today represents a strong evangelistic outreach.

in the denomination. It was on May 20, 1861 that the General Conference, in their second annual session at Wadsworth, Ohio, adopted resolutions approving the establishment of a theological institution.

Daniel Hege presented the major argument for such an institution for

1) the unification of American Mennonites, and 2) the spread of the Gospel of Christ.¹⁰⁸

The Wadsworth Institute which was operated by the Conference from 1868-1878 had a total of 310 students during the eleven years. Though closed for lack of financial support and misunderstanding among faculty members and churches, it developed over the decade a generation of trained ministers, and promoted the spirit of evangelical work and the cause of mission.¹⁰⁹ A. B. Shelly wrote in Der Mennonitische Friedensbote in 1879, "Among our ablest ministers both West and East, are some who have secured their education in our (Wadsworth) School. Almost in every church there are some who have attended that institution, and are now exerting their influence as leaders and teachers..."¹¹⁰

The Wadsworth Institute had shown that higher education was not incompatible with humility and evangelical zeal. Other institutions of higher learning begun by the General Conference included Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas (1888); Bluffton College,

¹⁰⁸H. P. Krehbiel, The History of the General Conference of the Mennonites of North America (St. Louis: Wiebusch, 1898), p. 83.

¹⁰⁹Edmund G. Kaufman, The Development of the Missionary and Philanthropic Interest Among the Mennonites of North America (Berne, Ind.: Mennonite Book Concern, 1931), pp. 92-97.

¹¹⁰J. E. Hartzler, Education Among the Mennonites of America (Danvers, Ill.: Central Mennonite Board, 1925), pp. 134-5.

Bluffton, Ohio (1900); Freeman Junior College, Freeman, South Dakota (1903); Rosthern Junior College, Rosthern, Saskatchewan (1905); Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba (1947); and Conrad Grebel College, on the campus and affiliated with the University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, (1964).

The influence of the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy was also felt in the General Conference, picking up some of the opposition to liberal arts education. Grace Bible Institute, Omaha, Nebraska (1943), though not listed as an institution of the General Conference, draws considerable support from General Conference churches and other Mennonite groups. Grace Bible Institute (and the Bible School movement) influences the Conference in turn through a large group of graduates as pastors in the General Conference, and the "Committee of Christian Concern" which was organized following the General Conference triennial sessions at Estes Park, Colorado in 1968, to promote concern for a more "evangelical and evangelistic" position for pastors, churches, and the Conference.¹¹¹

Two other efforts at theological education need now to be mentioned. Witmarsum Theological Seminary was operated from 1921-31 as an inter-Mennonite Seminary, having grown out of a department of Bluffton College. Between 1931 and 1945 the General Conference did not have a specific theological training school. Consequently young men preparing for the ministry attended other denominational semin-

¹¹¹Based on letter of January 20, 1970 sent to pastors of the General Conference by Dan U. Dalke, Secretary, Committee of Christian Concern.

aries, Hartford Seminary in Connecticut and New York Biblical attracting a number of students. Mennonite Biblical Seminary was organized by the General Conference in 1945 and was in affiliation with Bethany Biblical Seminary (Church of the Brethren) in Chicago until 1958 when Mennonite Biblical Seminary was moved to Elkhart, Indiana where it is now in close affiliation with Goshen Biblical Seminary in the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries. Implications for preaching in this most recent venture of the Conference in a Seminary program are found in a common concern with the Mennonite Church, that 1) theological training be Biblically oriented, 2) that it include Christian community and discipleship in the Free Church tradition, and 3) that it be mission oriented.¹¹²

The interest in higher education and theological education, which has stimulated research in Anabaptism and recovery of a strong mission-service outreach through Mennonite Central Committee¹¹³ and the Commissions on Overseas Mission and on Home Ministries, has also accelerated acculturation and a "this-world orientation." The experience of increasing numbers of young people attending liberal arts and technical and scientific educational institutions and the return to (and often exodus from) the churches of many young people who have traveled and who have spent time in areas of human need in the

¹¹²Ross T. Bender, "A Model for Theological Education in the Free Church Tradition," (unpublished paper, Elkhart, Indiana, August, 1969, p. 1.

¹¹³This story is told by John D. Unruh, In the Name of Christ (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1952). See also MQR, XLIV:3 (July 1970), 245.

church's Voluntary Service and overseas PAX program for conscientious objectors have ended the day of isolation. "What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus today?" is a burning question for many in the General Conference. The practice and authentication of preaching in this context will be discussed further in the next section.

C. SUMMARY

In this historical sketch, after noting that attempts at understanding and classifying Anabaptism focus on the concept of the church, we have traced the beginnings of Anabaptism in Switzerland, Holland, and South Germany. Issues at stake were the question of authority and freedom of conscience. Anabaptism may be seen as a return to the Scriptures in an effort to restore the true church of Christ. In this attempt, preaching played an important role, initially having a strong missionary ring. But with discipleship seen as the essence of Christian faith, preaching also took on a strong exhorting, admonishing characteristic. This became particularly evident following the formative years of Anabaptism when persecution and defection heightened the concern for consolidation, and the movement took on characteristics of withdrawal.

What authenticated the preaching? The call and conduct of the preacher, the Scriptures, the congregation which both tested the "call" and served as locus for interpretation of the Word of Scripture, and the Spirit at work in all of these. An implicit "kingdom theology," focusing on the Nachfolge Christi of the Synoptic Gospels gave formative Anabaptism a healthy concern for discipleship in the relationships

of the Christian in this world. Following "withdrawal from the world," a recovery of the Anabaptist vision in the present century (together with the interest in education and the revolutions of our day) have forced our denomination to face the question whether Christian discipleship is not more than being simply "Die Stillen im Lande."

CHAPTER II

CONTEMPORARY PREACHING IN THE GENERAL CONFERENCE MENNONITE CHURCH

This chapter will focus on preaching in the General Conference Mennonite Church. This body, whose offices are at 722 North Main, Newton, Kansas, represents 295 congregations with a membership of 55,631 in the United States and Canada. The Conference is divided into six district conferences, with the Canadian Conference further subdivided into provincial conferences. The number of congregations in each district are: Canadian 106, Central 44, Eastern 27, Northern 33, Pacific 21, and Western 64.¹

The General Conference has many small congregations, 186 (63%) having less than 125 members, and only 18 (6.1%) having over 500 members.² Harder's research reveals that the General Conference had an average membership of 179 per congregation in 1960, and 186 members per congregation in 1970.³ The rural geographical character of these congregations is evident in that the 193 pastors reporting in the questionnaire survey for this study represented congregations located as follows:

¹General Conference Mennonite Church, 1970-71 Handbook of Information (Newton, Kan.: Faith and Life Press, 1970), p. 61.

²Ibid., pp. 62-68.

³Leland Harder, General Conference Mennonite Church Fact Book of Congregational Membership (1971), pp. ii, 3.

	Rural (2,500 or less)	Town (2,500-50,000)	City (over 50,000)
Number	113	42	38
Percent	58.6%	21.7%	19.7%

In the revised Constitution of the General Conference, adopted at the Estes Park triennial sessions, July, 1968, the purpose of the Conference is stated as a fellowship of congregations committed:

1. To proclaim Jesus Christ through appropriate ministries...
2. To establish and maintain local congregations...
3. To understand more adequately the essence of the Christian faith and to accept its implications for total living.
4. To discern the nature of Christian unity, demonstrating and seeking such unity...
5. To teach vital and meaningful New Testament principles...
6. To acknowledge the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures as source for counsel and direction in fulfilling Christian responsibilities.

The Constitution also includes the "Common Confession" of belief in "the divine inspiration and the infallibility of the Bible as the Word of God and the only trustworthy guide of faith and life....," affirmation of "historic principles of faith," such as salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, baptism on confession of faith, the biblical doctrine of nonresistance, a scriptural church discipline, and finally, a paragraph on the "Separated Life."⁵ The polity of the General Conference is congregational, with the local congregation recognized as the basic organizational unit. Each congregation has the autonomy to call its own ministers, but the Constitution

⁴Constitution and Charter of the General Conference Mennonite Church, 1968, p. 7. See complete statement of purpose in Appendix A.

⁵Ibid., pp. 7-8.

also encourages that these ministers be "certified or registered by the General Conference under the provisions and procedures defined by the Conference through its Committee on the Ministry."⁶

The sections of the Constitution on purpose and confession, polity and membership are found in Appendix A.

Following analysis of the questionnaire survey of the General Conference pastors regarding preaching practice and understanding, and the question of authentication, we will give further attention to the context for preaching in the General Conference.

A. A SURVEY OF GENERAL CONFERENCE PASTORS

A mail questionnaire survey of General Conference pastors during November, 1970, was used to gather information relating to preaching practice, the pastors' views of preaching, and their opinion as to what authenticates preaching for the hearer.⁷ Of specific interest was the pastors' evaluation of the role of Scripture, preacher, Spirit, congregation, and world in authenticating preaching. The cover letter sent with the questionnaire also requested inclusion of the November 15, 1970 church bulletin for the purpose of analyzing the place and topic of Scriptures and sermon in the worship of the churches on a given Sunday.⁸ From this very limited information the writer has also

⁶Ibid., p. 12.

⁷See pages 63-67 for a copy of the questionnaire and its intention and limitations.

⁸See Appendix B for copy of the cover letter.

attempted to infer whether Anabaptist themes of Discipleship, Christian Living and Mission were prominent, and what other themes were stressed on a given Sunday in the preaching in General Conference churches.

A total of 273 questionnaires were sent to the pastors of the General Conference churches as listed on pages 5-10 of The General Conference Mennonite Church 1970-71 Handbook of Information. This included all of the General Conference churches except twenty-eight for whom no pastor was listed. No questionnaires were sent to the forty-one churches affiliated with district conferences, but not members of the General Conference (thirty of these in Canada). For the Canadian churches, of which a number retain a lay multiple ministry, the questionnaire was sent to the pastor whose name was listed first. In the United States most of the churches have only one pastor, but questionnaires were also sent to six associate pastors of the larger congregations. A self-addressed stamped envelope was enclosed with the questionnaire and cover letter. No follow-up mailing was done.

Of 273 questionnaires sent out, 193 were returned completed for a 70.7 percent return of completed questionnaires. In addition, six were returned undeliverable because of the move of pastors or address changes (one Alta. Canadian, one Central, four Eastern). Four other completed questionnaires were returned too late to be included in the following tabulations. Table I, below, indicates the completed questionnaire returns by districts and provinces utilized in this study. Recording of data has been done by districts, but analysis will call attention to individual districts only when significant variation appears.

TABLE I

PERCENTAGE OF COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE RETURNS

Canadian District Conference

	Alta.	B.C.	Man.	Ont.	Sask.	Total
Sent	8	13	29	15	31	96
Return	7	10	19	12	20	68
Percent	87.5%	77%	65.5%	80%	64.5%	70.8%

U.S. District Conferences

	Central	Eastern	Northern	Pacific	Western	Total U.S.
Sent	42	29	33	19	54	177
Return	30	17	21	14	43	125
Percent	71.4%	58%	63.6%	73.7%	77.7%	70.6%

The Questionnaire"Preaching in the General Conference Mennonite Church"

A. THE CHURCH

1. District: Canadian ____, Central ____, Eastern ____,
Northern ____, Pacific ____, Western ____.
2. Location: rural ____, village ____, town ____, city ____,
(under 2500) (2500-10,000) (10-50,000)
metropolitan (over 50,000) ____.
3. Membership:
under 100 ____, 101-250 ____, 251-500 ____, over 500 ____.
4. Does your church have a divided chancel? ____
a center pulpit? ____
5. Is the use of the pulpit reserved for ordained persons?
yes ____ no ____

B. THE PASTOR

1. Age: under 21 ____, 21-30 ____, 31-40 ____, 41-50 ____,
51-60 ____, over 61 ____.
2. Education: Circle highest grade completed:
8 or less; High School 9, 10, 11, 12; College 1, 2, 3, 4;
Seminary 1, 2, 3; Post seminary 1, 2, 3.
3. Schools attended beyond high school: a. Bible School ____,
b. Mennonite College ____, c. non-Mennonite church
college ____, d. state college or university ____, e. a
Mennonite Seminary ____, f. other (name) _____

C. PREACHING

1. Average amount of time given to preparation of one sermon:
a. under 5 hours ____, b. 6-10 hours ____, c. 11-15 hrs.
____, d. over 16 hrs. ____.
2. Do you have a working knowledge of:
a. Greek ____, b. Hebrew ____, c. German ____?
3. Sources for preaching
(rate 1, 2, 3 in order of importance in planning your sermon)
a. ____ church year e. ____ books of sermons
b. ____ Scripture texts f. ____ commentaries
c. ____ social issues g. ____ other (name) _____
d. ____ pastoral visits _____

4. Approximately how many sermons since Jan. 1, 1970 were based on texts from:
(check your bulletins or give approximate figures.)
- | | |
|---|---|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> Old Testament | d. <input type="checkbox"/> Pauline Epistles |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> Gospels | e. <input type="checkbox"/> other N. T. books |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> Acts | |
5. How have you tried to involve the congregation in the preaching task?
- | |
|--|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> Ask congregation for questions, concerns, texts, as preaching themes |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> Announce sermon topics or scripture for next Sunday |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> Sermon outline or notes in bulletin |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss sermon text with members during preparation |
| e. <input type="checkbox"/> Dialogue sermons |
| f. <input type="checkbox"/> Post-preaching discussion |
| g. <input type="checkbox"/> Other (list) _____ |
6. What opportunities do you provide for response to the message?
- | | |
|--|--|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> altar call | e. <input type="checkbox"/> personal vocal expression |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> prayer | f. <input type="checkbox"/> handshake at the door |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> offering | g. <input type="checkbox"/> signing of commitment card |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> hymn | h. <input type="checkbox"/> other (name) _____ |

D. QUESTIONS ABOUT PREACHING

1. What do you see as the purpose of preaching?
(rate 1, 2, 3 in order of importance)
- | |
|--|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> proclaim the gospel |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> teach the Scriptures |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> confront people with the need for commitment to Christ |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> admonish and exhort to Christian living |
| e. <input type="checkbox"/> promote the church |
| f. <input type="checkbox"/> mobilize people for ministry in the world |
| g. <input type="checkbox"/> other (name) _____ |
2. What, in your opinion, authenticates (validates, gives authority to) preaching for the hearer?
(rate 1, 2, 3 in order of importance)
- | |
|--|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> the use of the Scriptures |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> the sincerity of the preacher |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> the ordination of the preacher |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> the Holy Spirit |
| e. <input type="checkbox"/> when the message meets the hearer's need |
| f. <input type="checkbox"/> the credibility (believability) of the message |
| g. <input type="checkbox"/> other (name) _____ |

3. What has most significantly influenced or shaped your preaching? (rate 1, 2, 3 in order of importance)
- a. _____ influence of a particular person (teacher, preacher, theologian, etc.) name _____
 - b. _____ influence of a particular school or school of thought
name _____
 - c. _____ the kerygmatic (preaching) nature of the Scriptures
 - d. _____ your "personal experience of the Gospel"
 - e. _____ the call of the congregation
 - f. _____ the Holy Spirit
 - g. _____ the needs of modern man
 - h. _____ other (name) _____

4. What is your greatest concern about preaching? _____

The questionnaire was planned to gather information about the churches and pastors that might indicate the seriousness with which the preaching task is undertaken in General Conference churches, with the specific focus on authentication of preaching.

Questions A.4 and 5 on center pulpit, and the pulpit reserved for the ordained minister might be suggestive of a strong preaching tradition. For Mennonites, the presence of the pulpit in the center of the meetinghouse and the absence of the altar have been characteristic.⁹ Also the development of a practice reserving the pulpit for the ordained minister developed in days when the minister was seen as the authority figure, but has seemed inconsistent with the heritage of a lay ministry and emphasis on priesthood of all believers.

⁹H. S. Bender, "Sermons," Mennonite Encyclopedia (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1959), IV, 503.

Questions B.2 and 3 about educational level and types of educational experiences seemed important in understanding how our pastors function in a day when the educational level of the congregations is so rapidly rising.¹⁰ Also, what is the impact of the Bible Schools, Mennonite Colleges and Seminary, and non-Mennonite educational institutions? What are the educational influences upon the pastors?

Time given to sermon preparation and a working knowledge of Biblical languages (C.1 and 2) may indicate the seriousness with which preaching is undertaken.

What is the "source of preaching" was the query in questions C.3 and 4. Here, however, it was not clarified whether source was to be understood in the sense of "authority" or as resource for preaching ideas and material content for sermons. Though even response on the basis of the latter understanding would appear to give some indication of where the pastor finds authority for preaching. In question C.4, on the Biblical texts used in preaching, the categories were too broad. More instructive would have been a listing of the texts, or at least a breakdown by individual Biblical writings.

Awareness of the corporate character of the church's preaching ministry suggested questions C.5 and 6. How do pastors seek to involve the congregation in preaching, to establish communication as well as to share the preaching task?

The question in section D. represented the core of the questionnaire about the authentication of preaching. How do pastors

¹⁰Harder, op. cit., pp. 16,37.

view the function of preaching? (D.1) What authenticates the preaching to the hearer? (D.2) What has most obviously influenced the pastor's preaching? (D.3) In structuring these questions so pastors could simply check the answers, we must recognize the possibility of setting up false categories, or of guiding the responses. For this reason the "other" category was listed for write-in responses which have been taken seriously in the analysis. So the responses to the final open ended question were given considerable attention as they may reflect more fully what pastors wanted to say about preaching.

In the analysis of questionnaire responses several principles guided the interpreter:

1. Though data has been tabulated by districts, ages, and educational level, a composite picture will be presented, with significant unanimity as well as deviations from the norm noted.
2. Several tables of statistics are included for further study, though analysis will not necessarily focus on all the details.
3. Analysis in the text deals primarily with the question of this study, the "authentication of preaching."

The limitations of this questionnaire study must be recognized:

1. Response categories in questions such as D.1, D.2, and D.3 are too formal and difficult to rate and did not provide opportunity to reflect on the relationship of the questions. Open ended questions here may have been more useful.
2. Composite tabulations are necessarily abstractions and must be understood as such, but also for their value in helping us

gain perspective and understanding of possible trends.

3. As the questionnaire was not sent to congregations without a pastor at the time, nor to all the lay pastors (in Canada) the responses may reflect a slightly higher level of education and training of pastors than the true picture of preaching in the General Conference.

4. Though the questionnaire was formulated in consultation with several other persons and shared for evaluation with twenty-five pastors of the Pacific District Ministers' Conference at Salem, Oregon, November 10, 1970, decision on the final form (with the limitations) was that of the writer.

Description of Preaching Practice

From the questions submitted to the pastors and a study of the church bulletins for November 15, 1970, we inquire into the preaching practices in the General Conference. First of all we will look at factors relating to the churches and pastors, and then specifically at preaching practice.

The Setting: The Churches. As already indicated, much of the preaching takes place in a rural setting. Of 193 pastors reporting, 58.6 percent preach in rural areas, 21.7 percent in towns of 2,500-50,000 population, and 19.7 percent in urban areas of over 50,000 population. Of 186 churches represented by the pastors reporting, 30.5 percent have a membership under 100, 37.4 percent a membership of 101-250, 23 percent a membership of 251-500, and 9.1 percent a membership

of over 500. Harder, showing the median membership of General Conference churches as 133 in 1968, points to the tendency of maintaining small churches. While mainline Protestant churches think of 500 members as the minimum for effective church life, some comfort may be taken in the deliberate commitment to smallness of groups as the Church of the Savior, Washington, D.C., whose minister, Gordon Cosby, contends that numbers tend toward depersonalization, toward institutionalization and toward a lessening of commitment. But smallness may also be the consequence of rural decline. The closing of over twenty churches in the General Conference during the sixties, mostly in rural areas, suggests this.¹¹

Many factors enter into the architecture of church buildings. Few of our congregations have given much thought to a "theology of architecture," but from the location of the pulpit we may infer something of the view about the place of preaching in our churches. Of 192 reporting, 45 report a divided chancel or off-center pulpit. Table II indicates the breakdown by districts. Of interest is the unusually strong center pulpit tradition in the Northern District. The Western District, with a 16-26 divided chancel to center pulpit ratio appears to have copied the more liturgical churches in architecture. The British Columbia churches reporting also indicate a trend away from a center pulpit. Though the pulpit may be placed "off center," several pastors called attention to the fact that it is not a divided chancel. The communion table rather than the altar has been

¹¹Ibid., p. 5.

seen as a focal point in Mennonite churches. But the fact that the pulpit is placed off center in 45 percent of the reporting churches may indicate not only copying of a variety of architectural forms, but also recognition that worship has several focal points, and that the reading of the Scriptures and the preaching may not necessarily be the only center of public worship.

TABLE II

NUMBER OF CHURCHES HAVING DIVIDED CHANCEL OR CENTER PULPIT

Canadian District						
	Alta.	B.C.	Man.	Ont.	Sask.	Total
Divided	3	7	2	2	3	17
Center	4	3	17	11	17	52
U.S. Districts						
	Central	Eastern	Northern	Pacific	Western	Total
Divided	4	3	1	4	16	28
Center	26	13	20	10	26	95
Canadian and U.S. Districts combined, divided chancel						45
center pulpit						147
total churches						192

To the question "Is the use of the pulpit reserved for ordained persons?" only 4 of 191 indicated in the affirmative (1 Alberta, 1 Manitoba, and 2 Western District), though several pastors indicated that "in the minds of some of the people it should be." The clear indication that the pulpit is open in almost all of the churches for use by unordained persons is interesting. At an earlier time when the

pastor was more of an authority figure there was a strong tradition in some of the communities for reserving the pulpit for the ordained pastor. Today there is increasing tendency to recognize ordination as a functional setting apart rather than the kind of sacerdotalism that at times developed even in Mennonite churches. Part of this has also come about with a rediscovery of the meaning of laos, the people of God. In the response to question C.5 about involving the congregation in the preaching task, fourteen pastors specifically listed "lay members," the people of the congregation sharing in the Sunday morning preaching task.

The Vehicle: The Preachers. The age range of 191 pastors reporting is given in Table III. With 34.5 percent of the pastors in the 41-50 age range this is clearly the median age range of the pastors reporting.

The educational level of 192 pastors reporting is given in Table IV. Several observations may be made:

1. Seven (3.6%) indicated they had completed grade 8 or less of formal education.
2. Twenty-one (10.9%) have not gone beyond high school.
3. Seventy-six (39.6%) have not had education beyond college, while 116 (60.4%) have had some theological education beyond college.
4. Eighty-eight (45.8%) have completed seminary or the equivalent of three years study beyond college. Of these, 14 are in the Canadian District. Seventy-four (59.6%) of the United States pastors have had three years of seminary training.

TABLE III

AGE RANGE OF 191 PASTORS

Age	Alta.	B.C.	Man.	Ont.	Sask.	Cent.	East.	North.	Pac.	West.	Total
21-30		3	1	1		2	2	2		1	12 6.8%
31-40	2	1	9	5	5	7	6	6	3	13	57 29.8%
41-50	2	5	4	3	12	10	6	7	6	11	66 34.5%
51-60	3	1	3	3	2	9	3	3	6	8	41 21.4%
Over 61			1		1	2		3		8	15 7.8%

TABLE IV
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF 192 PASTORS

Highest Grade completed	Alta.	B.C.	Man.	Ont.	Sask.	Cent.	East.	North.	Pac.	West.	Total
Grade 8 or less			3		3		1				7
Grade 9		1	1								2
Grade 10					1						1
Grade 11			2		1						3
H.S. Grad.		2			1	2	2			1	8
College 1	1		2			2		1		1	7
2			1		2			2	1		6
3		3	3	2	3		1			2	14
College Grad.	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	4	3	3	28
Seminary 1	1	1	1	1	3	5		2	1	3	18
2				1	2	1	1	1	1	3	10
Seminary Grad.	2	1	3	4	2	13	6	7	6	23	67
Post Grad. 1				1		2	1	3	1	3	11
2						1	1	1		1	4
3				1		1	1		1	2	6
Total	7	10	19	12	20	30	17	21	14	42	192

5. Twenty-one (10.9%) have done graduate work beyond seminary. Two of these were from Ontario, the others from the United States districts.

6. The median school years completed by pastors reporting is 17, or completion of one year of seminary. The median school years completed by United States pastors is 18.2, just over two years of seminary training.

In studying the listing of schools attended beyond high school, Table V, it is of interest to note that 45 percent of the pastors reporting have attended a Bible school, 70 percent a Mennonite college, and 45.6 percent a Mennonite seminary. In studying this Table it is important to note that a pastor may have attended several different institutions. Pastors in the Canadian District have attended primarily Bible schools, Mennonite colleges, or a Mennonite seminary, though eighteen list state colleges and universities. In the districts in the United States, 25.9 percent have listed attendance at other than Bible school, Mennonite college or Mennonite seminary. This list includes at least thirty different theological schools. Those mentioned more than once include: Hartford Seminary (4), New York Biblical (4), Princeton (3), Dallas Theological (3), Grace Seminary (3), Union (2), Gettysburg Lutheran (2).

Though reasons for choosing a particular theological school or the influences of specific schools were not studied, several observations may be made:

1. There is the geographical factor, the proximity to a theological school, particularly for men in the Eastern and Pacific

TABLE V

SCHOOLS ATTENDED BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL BY 192 PASTORS

Schools	Alta.	B.C.	Man.	Ont.	Sask.	Cent.	East.	North.	Pac.	West.	Total
Bible School	6	4	13	7	11	9	6	14	6	11	87 45.1%
Mennonite College	5	7	12	10	12	23	7	13	10	36	135 70%
Non Mennonite Church College						3	4	4	2	6	19 9.8%
State College or University	1	1	5	5	6	7	1	1	2	13	42 21.7%
Mennonite Seminary	3	2	5	8	6	16	6	9	6	27	88 45.6%
Other Seminaries (listed below)			1		2	11	7	9	6	14	50 25.9%

Manitoba: M.B. Bible College. Sask.: Lutheran Theol., Iliff.

Central: Union, Gettysburg Luth., Princeton, Medical, Yale, Fuller, Baptist, United Church, N.Y. Bib., Northern Baptist, City Univ., Winona Lake.

Eastern: Dallas, Westminster, East. Bap., Bob Jones, Tech. Col., Clinical, Lancaster, Boston Univ.

Northern: United Theol., Grace (2), Dallas, Presby., Waterloo, Oberlin, Princeton, Harvard, N.Y. Bib.

Pacific: Grace, STC, Nazarene, S.W. Bap., Cong., Lutheran, Correspondence school.

Western: Union, Yale, Lutheran Gettysburg, Clinical training, Northern Bap., Moody, Northern Evang., N.Y. Biblical (2), Garrett, Hartford (4), Princeton.

Districts.

2. Theological considerations in choosing a school enter in, with Bible school graduates inclined to choose Fundamentalist or the more conservative evangelical oriented schools while students from the liberal arts Mennonite colleges tend to go on to Mennonite Biblical Seminary or the mainline Protestant denominational seminaries.

3. From 1931-1945 when the General Conference did not have a seminary, young men preparing for the ministry had to go to non-Mennonite schools for theological training. In a study of the pastors age 50 and over, New York Biblical and Hartford Seminaries were listed four times each. The impact of the New York Biblical inductive method of Bible study has been strong in the Conference through the influence of men like Erland Waltner and Jacob J. Enz, both now on the faculty of Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

4. There has been a pronounced impact upon the General Conference through Mennonite Biblical Seminary and Canadian Mennonite Bible College (whose teachers, Henry Poettcker, David Schroeder, and Waldemar Janzen, are graduates of Mennonite Biblical Seminary with graduate degrees respectively from Princeton, University of Hamburg, and Harvard.) A listing of schools particularly influencing the preaching as recorded by pastors in question D.3 is found in Appendix E. As this question dealt with many possible influences, only a limited number of pastors listed specific schools, but those schools listed more than once included: Mennonite Biblical Seminary (14), Canadian Mennonite Bible College (9), Grace Bible Institute (5), and other Bible schools or Bible colleges (8).

5. The impact of Bible schools is also evident, as well as the fact that many educational and theological influences and traditions shape the preaching in our churches. An interesting further study might focus on the theological influences on pastors on the basis of where they have studied.

Note should be made at this point that there is another large group of ministers in the General Conference, many of whom have studied in the Mennonite and/or non-Mennonite schools, but are not presently pastors of churches in the United States and Canada.¹² Many of these have earned advanced degrees and are in teaching or administrative positions. Others are missionaries. This inquiry does not include these groups. Also, according to Harder's study of ex-members who left the General Conference during the decade from 1960-1970, 45.3 percent were in professional-technical occupational categories, and of these, 14.5 percent were ministers.¹³ None of these are included in this study.

If the knowledge of several languages is seen as an important tool for the study of the Biblical materials and the literature of the Christian Church, and for the expression of Christian faith, it should be noted that fifty-seven, or 30 percent of 190 pastors reporting professed a working knowledge of Greek, twenty or 10.5 percent a knowledge of Hebrew, and 68.4 percent a knowledge of German. The lack of know-

¹²General Conference, 1970-71 Handbook of Information, pp. 19-22.

¹³Harder, op. cit., p. 27.

ledge of the Biblical languages by a large majority of pastors may reflect something of a latent anti-educational bias, and the pressure to be "practical." The influence of an earlier, and in some instances, renewal, of the lay ministry pattern is also part of this picture. During the years of Mennonite Biblical Seminary's affiliation with Bethany Biblical Seminary (1945-1958) the Biblical languages were not required. At the Associated Mennonite Seminaries, Elkhart, two years of New Testament Greek are required for the Master of Divinity Degree. It would seem that for the pastor who has the opportunity for theological education, a basic working knowledge of Greek, or Greek and Hebrew is essential if Biblical preaching is to be done seriously.

The ability to use German reflects the denomination's German cultural heritage, which is still pronounced in many Canadian Mennonite rural communities as well as the city churches where the arrival of large numbers of post-World War II immigrants has perpetuated the use of the German language. Ninety percent of the Canadian pastors reported facility in German. A study of the church bulletins for November 15, 1970, indicated ten churches having both a German and English sermon on Sunday morning. However, there are more Canadian Mennonite churches still having German or German-English services than the bulletins returned suggest.

The Preaching. What can we learn about preaching from the time given by the preacher to the preaching task, the sources used, preaching themes, and the ways in which the congregation is consciously involved in the preaching task? In addition to the questionnaire re-

sponses, observation will be added from study of the church bulletins sent by the pastors.

If the time given to preparation for preaching each Sunday suggests the seriousness with which the preaching task is undertaken in our churches, the survey indicates cause for concern as well as encouragement. To this question one pastor responded, "43 years!" as a way of saying that preaching comes out of a person's whole lifetime of experiences. The 190 pastors reporting on the time spent in preparation of one sermon may be grouped as follows:

	under 5 hours	6-10 hours	11-15 hours	16 hours or more
number	18	108	47	17
percent	9.5%	56.8%	24.7%	9%

Six to ten hours preparation per sermon represents the general practice. What might be learned about those giving little or much time to preparation for preaching? Thirteen of the seventeen devoting at least two days a week to preparation for preaching listed three years of seminary or more as their educational level. Fourteen of these preachers are known to this writer and represent a high regard for the preaching ministry. Most of them serve congregations that expect a strong preaching ministry. Of the eighteen listing less than 5 hours in preparation, seven have attended seminary. Four are seminary graduates, including two recent graduates who are innovative regarding new forms of worship but do not consider preaching central to public worship.

What do pastors see as the sources for sermon preparation and

preaching? This question, C.3, asked for a rating of 1, 2, and 3 in order of importance to them. Giving a value of 3 for a 1 rating, 2 for a 2 rating, and 1 for a 3 rating, the following totals were compiled in rating the sources:

Scripture texts	441
Church year	213
Social issues	140
Pastoral visits	126
Commentaries	81
Books of sermons	45
Other (7-1, 17-2, 17-3)	72

The other sources written in by the pastors included: other books and periodicals (9), Holy Spirit (6), felt needs of the congregation (5), church and theological issues (4), prayer (4), personal experience (4), series (3), Apostles Creed, Apocrypha, tracts.

Though the question did not clarify whether "source" was to be understood in the sense of authority, or as ideas and material content for preaching, even response on the basis of the second understanding may indicate something about authority. As we might have expected, the Scriptures are still seen as the primary source of preaching for most pastors, though it may be significant that 69 of 189 pastors did not list the Scriptures first in importance as source for their preaching. Perhaps even more surprising is the fact that twenty pastors did not list the Scriptures at all in giving a 1, 2, 3 rating of sources for preaching. These listed in order of importance, social issues, church year, and pastoral visits, several writing in "felt needs of the congregation." The age range included seven 31-40, six 41-50, five 51-60, and two 61 or over. Eleven of the twenty were seminary graduates. One whose education level was 8 grades or less simply listed "as the Lord

leads."

The General Conference does not have a book of common worship. However the Church Year does provide a framework in planning preaching. Several pastors indicated use of the International Sunday School lessons as a lectionary.

One hundred seventy-seven pastors listed the number of sermons based on Scripture texts since January 1, 1970 as:

	O.T.	Gospels	Acts	Paul	Other N.T.
Number of sermons	1672	2582	544	2043	874
Percent	21.6%	33.4%	7%	26.4%	11.3%

Since these are such general groupings it is difficult to draw specific conclusions except that the Gospels continue as a major source for preaching in Mennonite churches. In analyzing the bulletins of November 15, 1970 sent in by 151 pastors, a total of 129 Scripture passages were listed, 31 (14%) from the Old Testament, and 98 (76%) from the New Testament texts, 47 (48%) were from the Gospels (36% Synoptics and 12% John), and 29 (29.6%) were Pauline, with 12 of these texts taken from the Letters to the Corinthians.

An analysis of 129 sermon titles gleaned from the bulletins indicated the following themes:

Christian living	71
Kingdom and Second Coming	9
Christ	8
Salvation	7
Power of God	7
Church	7
Thanksgiving, gratitude	7
Missions	4

Man and death	3
Bible	2
Satan	2
Other	2

The preponderance of Christian living sermons, 55 percent of the total, could be evidence of a continuing exhortation to discipleship focus of Mennonite preaching. However it could also be related to a seasonal emphasis. The November church calendar in the General Conference listed November 1 as Peace Sunday, November 8 as Stewardship Day, and November 22 was the Sunday before Thanksgiving in the United States. Nineteen stewardship emphasis sermons were included in the Christian living total.

Eighteen, 12 percent of the congregations, had a guest minister on that Sunday. Five did not have a sermon at all, but had conference reports, audio-visual Poverty Fund program, or a music service. Three churches had Church College promotion Sunday, and one listed a dialogue sermon.

In forty-six services the Scripture text was listed to be read just preceding the sermon, whereas in ninety-one bulletins the Scripture reading was listed earlier in the service with hymns, anthems, prayers, offering, between the reading of the Scriptures and the sermon. Forty-four congregations had the offering following the sermon as a form of response or commitment. Creative structuring of the service by use of headings in the bulletin was used by twenty-five pastors.¹⁴ Two pastors sent several bulletins illustrating how they change the structuring every Sunday to meet particular needs or pur-

¹⁴See Appendix C.

poses. Several congregations try to allow for more freedom for the leading of the Holy Spirit by providing time for sharing of personal and congregational concerns. One congregation used a Folk Liturgy service each Sunday during November.

We conclude this descriptive section on preaching in General Conference churches by analysis of two related questions, C.5, "How have you tried to involve the congregation in the preaching task?" and C.6, "What opportunities do you provide for response to the message?"

On ways of involving the congregation in preaching, the pastors checked the ideas listed in the questionnaire with the following frequency:

Ask congregation for questions, concerns, texts as preaching themes	101
Announce sermon topics or Scripture for next Sunday	83
Post preaching discussion	76
Sermon outline or notes in bulletin	41
Discuss sermon text with members during preparation	40
Dialogue sermons	32

The "other" blank was checked by sixty pastors who wrote in:

Laymen, youth preach	14
Sunday School discussion	10
Sunday evening and midweek discussion	5
Listen for comments	4
Church Council or trusted laymen evaluation	4
Sermon in song or hymns in sermon	3
Series and book studies	3
Drama, choral speaking, interview, panel, testing, overhead projector and other visual aids, sharing, problem solving, note taking	1 each

On providing opportunities for response to the message, the pastors indicated use of the following:

Handshake at the door	153
Hymn	148
Prayer	107
Offering	103

Personal vocal expression	74
Altar call	61
Signing commitment card	14

Thirty-four pastors wrote in additional comments on the basis of their experience, listing:

Congregational or group discussion	10
Invitation to meet the pastor in the study	5
Quiet time	3
Sharing prayer requests or concerns	2
Clarify type of response desired to a particular sermon, Bible study in homes, living the message, prepared response by member who read sermon during the week	1 each

From this brief description of preaching gleaned from questionnaire responses and bulletins it is evident that preaching is still an important part in the worship service of almost all General Conference churches. The primary source for preaching continues to be the Scriptures, though there is increasing recognition that unless preaching communicates to the hearer at his level of need, the preaching is ineffective. Though traditional patterns are evident, many pastors are creatively seeking to bridge the communication gap by involvement of the congregation in the preaching task and providing ways in which people may respond to and share in the preaching.

The Function of Preaching

General Conference pastors, answering the question, "What do you see as the purpose of preaching?" responded with a high rating for the traditional "proclaim the gospel." Asked to rate six suggested purposes 1, 2, 3 in order of importance, they came up with the following order:

Proclaim the gospel	370
Confront people with the need for commitment to Christ	276
Teach the Scriptures	192
Admonish and exhort to Christian living	159
Mobilize people for ministry in the world	150
Promote the church	0

Six pastors wrote in other purposes as worship (2), to glorify God, encourage and inform, search for truth, meet the needs of people, theological reflection on life and self-discovery.

Several pastors wrote comments indicating the difficulty of rating the purpose of preaching in this way. Some saw "proclaim the gospel" and "teach the Scriptures" as the same, and "confront people with the need for commitment" and "admonish and exhort to Christian living" the same. Others felt the purpose of preaching is all of these. That "promote the church" received no rating may have been due to the use of the word "promote." But there is also negative reaction to the preaching that centers on perpetuation of institutional form.

Perhaps a better way of getting at what pastors consider the purpose of preaching can be gained from analysis of their comments to the open ended question D.4: "What is your greatest concern about preaching?"

Table VI classifies the concerns about preaching expressed by 182 pastors on the basis of the major thrust of their comment. Did it focus on preaching as God's Word and Action, man's need and response or both God's Word and man's need? Or was the concern one about preaching as communication, the preacher, or the congregation? This classification, developed in studying the responses, attempted to recognize that concerns expressed placed emphasis in preaching on the

TABLE VI

CLASSIFICATION OF CONCERNS ABOUT PREACHING BY 182 PASTORS

	Alta.	B.C.	Man.	Ont.	Sask.	Cent.	East.	North.	Pac.	West.	Total
God's Word and Action Christ Scripture truth		1	3	2	3	6	1	5	1	8	30
Man's Need Human Response	1		2	1	2	2	3	1		1	13
God's Word and Man's Need	3	2	4	4	7	11	9	3	8	18	69
Communication relevance preaching as communication tool	2	4	6		2	6	1	4	6	5	39
Preacher qualities inadequacies attitudes	1			1	2	4	2	6	1	5	22
Congregation views and acceptance of preaching		1	3	2			1	2		3	12

God-Word, or man's need, or included the concern about both. No specific study was done to determine whether the emphasis on the God-Word was specifically the Barthian influence or a Fundamentalist-evangelical concern, though the latter was evident in a number of responses referring to the "inerrancy of the Scriptures." Nor does the nature of the data permit us to suggest that the responses that referred only to man's need are necessarily a "Bultmannian" concern about the existential needs of man.

However, communicating so that God's Word become reality to man's need was a key concern. "How can the needs of man be met by the message of the Gospel?" "How can the Gospel be spoken with relevance to modern man?" "How can I sense the needs of the people, and speak a Word of God that will help liberate them for service?" This is the struggle of the preacher and points us to the purpose of preaching, to make available God's Word (Action) to meet man at the deepest levels of his need. Thirty-eight percent of the pastors expressed concern that preaching have this twin foci of dealing in an authentic and effective way, with God's Word and man's need, and another twenty-one percent singled out the problem of communication: How do you do this in preaching?

Many pastors expressed definitions of preaching that went beyond traditional "preach the Scriptures," "preach the Word," "glorify Christ" assertions. Following are several comprehensive-type definitions touching on the proclaiming-confronting-inviting aspect, the fellowship of the church, and exhortation to discipleship in Christian living and missions/service witness:

"Get changed. Get together. Get going."

"Preach to make the Gospel clear enough so men will respond gladly and mobilize to evangelize."

"Confront the congregation in preaching with God through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit that they might meet Him, commit themselves to Him and go out to serve Him."

"Preaching should lead men to personal commitment to Christ, to fellowship with the committed, and to a call to mission in the name of Christ."

"Preach so that it will draw persons to Christ and impel them to be good witnesses for Him."

Of the concerns expressed by the pastors, twenty-eight percent included a specific Christian living or discipleship emphasis. Several pastors pointed out that since most of the preaching is done within the context of the congregation the purpose of their preaching is the Ephesians 4:12-14 "equipping for ministry." So it was asserted too that proclamation of the Gospel is the task of every member.

A recurring concern expressed had to do with the need for preaching to be relevant to man's present need:

"That it express the contemporary presence of God, what God is saying and doing now, not an archivist's tour of the past."

"Preaching should be directed to people at the point of their greatest human need. Focus: Need-Gospel-Invitation."

"Get at root of life's problems today. Answer the basic questions of how man can be faithful to God's call and provide inspiration to being faithful in the dilemmas of the day."

Considerable doubt was expressed whether preaching can really do that in a multi-media age. We dare not overestimate the effects of preaching at the expense of other teaching-inspiring methods (music, drama, audio-visual), or forget that preaching is most effective within the context of a relational ministry. Nor dare we forget that pro-

clamation is the task of every member. As one pastor summarized, "Preaching needs to be dethroned in order to become an effective worship tool, but we neglect it to the detriment of the church."

The Authentication of Preaching

The pastor's responses about the purpose of preaching have already indicated something about authentication. Unless the preaching brings a Word of God to man's need it is powerless or irrelevant. That is, unless there is some word that speaks to man's preoccupation with his own being or that can set him free from his anxiety about nonbeing, bring healing and hope, and a reordering of his individual and corporate life, it is not an authentic word. The claim of the Christian gospel is that in Jesus Christ God has spoken such a word. Authentic preaching comes to grips with these two foci of a God-Word to meet man's need.

What is it that gives the ring of authority, validation, truth, authenticity to preaching for the hearer? How do General Conference pastors view this question when asked to rate the Scriptures, sincerity and ordination of the preacher, Holy Spirit, the message meeting the hearer's need, and the credibility of the message in order of importance as authenticating factors for the hearer? Below is their order:

Holy Spirit	390
Scriptures	345
When the message meets the hearer's need	212
Sincerity of the preacher	92
Credibility of the message	66
Ordination of the preacher	5

Seven pastors wrote in other factors, relevance or life-relat-

edness (3), when preaching meets expectations of the hearers (2), living or doing the message, Christ.

That the preachers would rate the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures high in authentication might be expected. Few if any preachers would claim to speak in their own authority. Table VII, a rating of the factors that shape or influence the preaching again lists the Holy Spirit high, second only to "personal experience of the Gospel." Several pastors called attention to the difficulty of answering questions about the Holy Spirit, expressing the view that the Spirit works through all of the other factors as the Scriptures, the preacher, and the congregational needs.

"Can't we assume that the Holy Spirit works through many means directing one's whole thinking?"

"When the needs of modern man, your personal experience of the Gospel and the Scriptures converge, it is the Holy Spirit at work in preaching."

It is likely that the pastors rate the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures much higher in authenticating preaching than the people of the congregations. A brief questionnaire was used following this writer's sermon to the congregation of the First Mennonite Church, Upland, California, on Sunday, November 15, 1970.¹⁵ The people were asked to respond to the question, "What authenticated (made valid, gave

¹⁵See Appendix D. The sermon, "Who Cares?," based on Luke 10: 38-42 focused on "God's caring" as being at the heart of the Gospel, and what it means to care. The questionnaires were distributed immediately after the sermon with a brief explanation and collected after a ten minute period of silence. A note in the bulletin had alerted the people that they would be asked to respond to the sermon in a brief questionnaire. Seventy of the seventy-eight worshipers completed the questionnaire.

authority to) this sermon for you?" They were asked to rate in order of importance the use of the Scriptures, sincerity of the preacher, ordination of the preacher, the Holy Spirit, the message spoke to your need, and the credibility (believability) of the message. Here is the rating, again using a 3-1, 2-2, and 1-3 scale of value rating:

The sincerity of the preacher	115
The use of the Scriptures	94
The credibility of the message	83
The message spoke to your need	62
The Holy Spirit	32
The ordination of the preacher	11
Four others mentioned the particular subject on caring and involvement with the needs of people	

Though this is far too limited a study on which to base general conclusions, and should be tested in other congregations, there are studies that indicate that in the eyes of the people the validation of a sermon is more related to the preacher as person than preachers like to admit or hear. Louis Cassels cites surveys conducted by the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio and the Episcopal Church Foundation indicating that laymen consider the most important traits in a pastor "a strong personal faith" and "responsible interpretation and communication of the faith."¹⁶

In a study on "The Lay Expectation Factors in Relation to the Preaching of Helmut Thielicke," the ideal lay expectation factors were ranked by laymen as:

Credibility, practical help for living, use of the Bible, theological content, comprehensibility, relevancy, confrontation with

¹⁶Louis Cassels, "Strong Personal Faith Important Quality," Bellingham Herald (October 10, 1970).

decision, thought provoking, attention holding, continuity (order), inspirational quality, use of illustrations, preacher's personality, manner of delivery, prophetic voice, use and basis of authority, evidence of preparation, love¹⁷=fear (quality of motivation), originality, and range of subjects.

Actually, the General Conference pastors in responding to question D.3, "What has most significantly influenced or shaped your preaching?" give evidence of the powerful impact of the person whose life has been shaped by "experience of the Gospel." According to Table VII they rated the influences shaping their preaching as:

Personal experience of the Gospel	375
Holy Spirit	260
Needs of modern man	154
The Scriptures	102
A particular person	96
A particular school or school of thought	78
The call of the congregation	70

Eight pastors listed also Anabaptist understanding of church fellowship (2), understanding myself and my gifts (2), challenge of classmates at Bible school, encounter with the world, Campus Crusade, and Faith at Work.

Unless a man's life has been shaped by "experience of the Gospel," the Holy Spirit at work in sensitizing a person to the needs of men, the Scriptures, and other committed persons, whether as individuals, in educational institutions, or the congregation, there is little chance that a man will sense a call to preach. For unless preachers have the gripping conviction that proclamation of the

¹⁷Marvin J. Dirks, "Lay Expectation Factors in Relation to the Preaching of Helmut Thielicke," (unpublished Th. D. dissertation, Boston University, 1968), Dissertation Abstracts, XXIX:6 (1968), 2.

kerygma, the recital of the great acts which God did in time in the man Christ Jesus, have bearing upon our life here and now, we will hardly have the ring of authenticity in calling men to repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the true humanity of identity with Christ as Savior and Lord. Unless there is some deep sense of conviction that preaching as proclamation is part of God's plan, and terribly serious business, to help men find their true freedom in the Grace of the Gospel and in committed discipleship, our message will lack the ring of authenticity. So one pastor expressed it:

"Preaching must come from the depth of the preacher's being, that the preacher continue to grow, to expose himself in his preaching, but point beyond himself, that the preacher has the ring of reality...that Jesus be the basic frame of reality."

Finally, we ought to note that though "the call of the congregation" rated low in the overall listing of influences that shape the preaching, 42.6 percent of the sixty-eight Canadian pastors reporting listed it as an important influence upon their preaching.¹⁸ Where pastors have had less opportunity for education generally, and specific theological training, the call of the congregation is rated correspondingly higher as an authenticating factor for the preacher.

Summarizing, what can we say about the authentication of preaching in the General Conference? The preachers view the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures as key authenticating factors, but also the "experience of the Gospel" in their own lives as a validating factor. Their serious grappling with the communication question indicates also

¹⁸ See Table VII, p. 91.

the recognition that preaching is not authentic until it touches the real needs of people and takes into account also the "lay expectation factors." Questions C.5 and C.6 on the "involvement of the congregation" and "opportunities for response to preaching" imply that authentic preaching expects a response that will lead to deeper commitment and expression of Christian faith in discipleship living.

Though this study did not deal adequately with the hearer response to what authenticates preaching, we may infer that though the people view the Scriptures fairly high as authenticating factor, they may not rate the Holy Spirit as high as the rating given the Spirit by the preachers. For the people, the pastor's integrity and sincerity appears to be a more important authenticating factor than his office by virtue of ordination. Finally, we note that the role of the congregation as authenticating factor becomes somewhat displaced where congregations look to the outside for an educated, trained preacher. The implication appears to be that theological training authenticates preaching. That would be a questionable assumption unless theological training is seen as equipping men to interpret the Scriptures and communicate the Gospel of the Living Lord more effectively so as to equip the congregation, all the people of God, for ministry.

A concluding word about the questionnaire studies must help us recognize that in asking the question of authentication as in questions D.1, 2, and 3, the rating assigns quantitative values and tends to add things which may undermine the basic authenticating factor, the Living Lord. So one might respond that insofar as Christ is communicated or revealed through preaching as Savior and Lord, when preaching is exper-

ienced as the Word of the Lord, then it is authentic. So 1 Corinthians 2:2, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified," must always call attention to the danger of even the Scriptures, the preacher, or the congregation becoming substitutes for the Living Lord in ways that undermine the Gospel, e.g., Christ plus circumcision means Christ died in vain. The pastors' response about the Holy Spirit as primary authenticating factor may have been a way of trying to say this, that authentication is not from us, but the work of God through the Spirit, as the Scriptures testify to the Living Lord, or as experience of the Gospel sensitizes us to human need. In Chapter III we will discuss further these factors in preaching, and their relationship in the authentication of preaching.

B. THE CONTEXT FOR PREACHING

Even though preaching on a given Sunday is mostly within the meetinghouse, and the context of the gathered congregation for worship, it is the larger context to which we now turn, the context of the world. For it is in the world that the church exists and the people of the congregation move, that preaching ultimately takes place. We look now at some of the aspects of this world that affect the authentication of preaching in our churches, and then more specifically at the impact of acculturation and change in the General Conference.

The Larger Context

Here we look first of all at a basic philosophical presupposition underlying our society, then at certain aspects of American (and

Canadian) culture, as alienation over middle class values, the work-leisure revolution, and the new authority and communication structure of our day.

The Pragmatic-Empirical Approach to Truth. Whether recognized or not, certain presuppositions underlie a society's view of life, and that of sub-cultures in that society. American culture is strongly influenced by a pragmatic-empirical approach. Truth is tested by its ability to "work," and application of the scientific inductive method. Emphasis is on the evolutionary and changing character of reality. An underlying assumption of our day is that the liberation of mankind will be achieved through the application of technology which is seen as a means to overcome the element of chance which is imposed by nature. Freedom is understood as escape from the constraints of human and non-human nature. So truth comes to be known as exactness with regard to facts. Nature yields the data which must (and supposedly can) be subjected to the "objectivity" of the scientific method. Such a view is in sharp contrast to a supernaturalism which is characterized by belief resting on organized authority and precedent, rigidity, faith and supernatural revelation, and otherworldliness.¹⁹

With a view of the Scriptures as revealed authority, the Holy Spirit as "illuminator," a certain aloofness from the world (in the area of politics, for example), the sober view of man and distrust in

¹⁹Henry N. Wieman and Bernard E. Meland, American Philosophies of Religion (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), pp. 33-40.

human reason, many Mennonites have been supernaturalists in their religious thinking, while becoming pragmatists in daily practice (use of the latest scientific methods and technological inventions in everyday life). What in the Anabaptist-Mennonite background and in the contemporary setting contributes to acceptance of the pragmatic approach to life, as well as the resulting tension?

Robert Friedmann has suggested that we can understand Anabaptism best as "existential Christianity" in contrast to any form of creedal Christianity, that for Anabaptist-Mennonites Christianity has meant a concrete faith, subjectively experienced, a faith witnessed to, suffered for, and in the end triumphant in spite of external defeat. At the same time Anabaptism was inclined to by-pass western civilization, contributing little to the secular culture in the realm of art, philosophy, music, or science.²⁰

R. C. Kauffman has made the point that in the Anabaptist rejection of the magical concepts prevailing at the time, it was a form of theistic naturalism, things had to make sense. In this regard for the Bible in the light of human experience, and the special emphasis placed on the practical aspects of the Gospel, Kauffman sees a pragmatism. Yet it was not a matter of displacing God by natural law, but rather a regard for natural law as God's usual way of doing things.²¹

²⁰Robert Friedmann, "The Anabaptists and We," Mennonite Life, XXII:3 (July 1967), 99.

²¹Ralph C. Kauffman, "The Philosophical Aspects of Mennonitism," Cultural Conference Proceedings (Newton, Kan., 1943), p. 115.

Harold H. Gross suggests that the fathers of Mennonitism knew that the human predicament poses "a fundamentally religious problem and not a philosophical one." They presupposed that duty or moral law has its source in God, and that reason is merely an aid to knowing and to interpreting it.²²

Perhaps these analyses of underlying presuppositions in Anabaptism and Mennonitism can help us understand the general acceptance of a pragmatic-empiricist approach to life as over against a supernaturalism which takes a passive pietistic form. The Mennonite tendency toward a "practical Christianity," that Christian faith must find expression in living has given a sensible, down to earth, activist character to forms of Mennonite-Christian discipleship. The view for example, that Christian faith must be concerned with human need has given rise to development of hospitals from the beginning of this century, the overseas relief ministries as an outgrowth of the Russian Revolution and the need of Mennonite refugees in the 1920's, the Voluntary Service units, the Servanthood Workcamps, Disaster Service organization, various forms of Mutual Aid, or within the past twenty-five years a growing interest in mental health and development of five outstanding regional treatment centers.²³ These developments as expressions of Nachfolge Christi will be discussed further in Chapter III.

²²Harold H. Gross, "Reflections on Kant and the Mennonites," Mennonite Life, I:2 (July 1946), 36.

²³Brook Lane Farm, Hagerstown, Maryland; Prairie View Hospital, Newton, Kansas; Kings View Homes, Reedley, California; Oaklawn Center, Elkhart, Indiana; and Kern View Hospital, Bakersfield, California.

At this point our question is whether in the context of the larger cultural milieu there is not also another factor at work, the education explosion, which has heightened the Mennonite acceptance of a pragmatic-empirical approach to life.

Harder's "mobility studies" of the General Conference (1970) indicates for example, that the median school years completed for General Conference members over age twenty-five in the United States and Canada is 12.0, and 12.5 in the United States districts. In the study of 138 control congregations, the proportion of members twenty-five years and older who have at least some college education has increased from 18.4 percent in 1960 to 26.3 percent in 1970. In the control churches of the United States this increase was from 21.9 percent to 31.5 percent.²⁴

Perhaps even more striking is the fact that in the designated occupational categories of gainfully employed members, 32.9 percent are professional and technical, reflecting both a high level of education and strong work ethic. Of the professionally employed members, 39.9 percent are teachers. Whereas in 1960, 40.4 percent of the General Conference college students were in attendance at Mennonite colleges and 59.6 percent were in non-Mennonite colleges, in 1970 68.8 percent were in non-Mennonite colleges while the percentage of those on a Mennonite college campus had dropped to 31.2 percent.²⁵

Attainment of formal education as a means of learning about

²⁴Harder, op. cit., pp. 16, 37.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 19, 38.

God's world and our place in it, has long had the support and sponsorship of our churches. As a means of gaining power in society, it tends to undermine a radical sense of Christian discipleship. The demands of the Gospel of the cross are surely utter foolishness from the perspective of ordinary human understanding of what is going on in the world and what powers are actually determining the course of history.²⁶ For preaching to be authentic in the congregations with ever larger numbers of college and university and technically trained members, it will need to "make sense," but will also need to speak the offense of the Gospel of the cross, and suffering, and of the God whose "power is made perfect in weakness"²⁷ if it will speak to the alienation felt by many, particularly the young.

Alienation over Middle Class Values. Alienation is being felt by many Mennonite young people who are part of a much larger youth culture challenging the values of a middle class society structure for its profit-oriented economic goals, waste of natural resources, acquiescence to the military-industrial complex, and oppression of minorities. At first glance it would appear that Mennonites, maintaining a historic peace church stance for 400 years have been able to resist the influences of misguided nationalism. For deep within the recent memory of North American Mennonites, many of whom came out of Russia in the 1870's, the 1920's, or the 1940's, is a history of migration in search

²⁶₁ Cor. 1:18-25.

²⁷₂ Cor. 12:9.

of freedom of conscience, particularly from encroaching powers of the state. Trends in maintenance or loss of "nonresistance" as a distinguishing doctrine of the Mennonite Church may be an important index of this tension. The percentage of conscientious objectors in the General Conference was about 33 percent in 1942, 27 percent in 1944, and 46 percent in 1954. Harder's study indicates that in 1960 48.2 percent of General Conference young men in service were in military service while 51.8 percent were in alternative service. In 1970 only 36.7 percent were in military service while those taking the conscientious objector position toward war had risen to 63.3 percent.²⁸

However, these figures may be misleading. The controversy generated at the 1969 and 1970 sessions of the Western District Conference over draft resistance and nonpayment of income tax for military spending is evidence both of the tension felt by many in the General Conference who have accepted a system that has institutionalized corruptness and made oppression a way of life, and those alienated by the system and who favor a radical stance that must challenge the system.²⁹ That is, when Christian discipleship becomes equated more or less with citizenship, and Christians come to feel that their responsibilities to God, to the church, and their fellowmen are substantially met in obedience to the laws of the state it becomes evident that church and

²⁸Harder, op. cit., p. 31.

²⁹Wendell Rempel, "Is Noncooperation a Responsible Christian Witness?", Mennonite, LXXXV:20 (May 19, 1970), 338-42; Phil Kliever, "Did the Cat Get Menno's Dove?", Mennonite, LXXXV:39 (October 27, 1970), 657-9.

state have become allies in the protection and consolidation of their vested interests, an alliance that must be challenged.

The "this-world" focus and attempt to wrestle with major issues of the day is evident in the theme chosen for the General Conference Youth Convention planned at Fresno, California for August 14-21, 1971, "Only in the Midst of the World is Christ Christ." Twelve of the twenty-four topics listed for discussion are specifically related to the "world" beyond Christian faith and home, including:

- Vocational decision-making
- Contemporary religious music
- Poverty in our world
- Voluntary service
- New Christian life style
- Draft resistance
- Christian and athletics
- The Indian in 1971
- The English and French conflict
- The Middle East
- Black history
- Women's lib and the church

In acceptance of an official conference symbol of the cross and the orb in 1965 the General Conference gave expression to this concern, the relationship of the church to the world. Historically, the cross and orb design has signified the sovereignty of Christ in the world and in the life to come.

The symbol suggests the inseparable relationship between faith (the cross) and life (the world). The line below the cross suggests the concept of a foundation. Our faith, as expressed by the meanings derived from the cross and orb, rests on a sure foundation.³⁰

Those who are alienated by the church's identity with middle class values, place emphasis on the cross confronting the structures

³⁰Constitution of the General Conference, 1968, p. 9.

of the world. For others, the "foundation" and the cross are understood in more pietistic terms, permitting a truce with certain aspects of this world while emphasizing the sovereignty of Christ in the life to come. Preaching in the churches must reckon with the implications of engagement or withdrawal theologies, and with this polarity among our people.

The Work-Leisure Revolution. Another aspect of culture affecting preaching is the work-leisure revolution, or for the churches, the "revolution of the absent."³¹ Robert Lee's study on Religion and Leisure in America³² has pointed up the need for church response to this new pattern of American life brought on by a work week of forty hours or less and three day weekends. While Mennonites of an earlier generation were dominated by a work ethic and agricultural life, and did not really learn to play, this situation is rapidly changing. The percentage of farmers of all gainfully employed members in the General Conference dropped from 30.7 percent in 1960 to 22.1 percent in 1970, and farm residence had dropped from 37.9 percent in 1960 to 29.9 percent. In the Eastern District only 4.3 percent were farmers in 1970.³³ It is estimated that the 3.7 million farms in the United States in 1960 will have been reduced to 1.4 million farms by 1980. By then probably

³¹Tracy Early, "The Revolution of the Absent," Spectrum, XLVI:1 (January-February 1970), 5-6.

³²Robert Lee, Religion and Leisure in America (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964).

³³Harder, op. cit., pp. 31-39.

less than 5 percent of the country's work force will live and work on the soil.³⁴ That this trend will continue also in the General Conference which has had its largest congregations in the rural areas of the midwestern states and central Canadian provinces is obvious. In a 1966 study of "Youth Attitudes Toward the Church," which included a random one fourth sampling of the high school age young people of the General Conference Mennonite Church, only 3 percent indicated plans to work on the farm at home after graduation from high school.³⁵

How will the church be able to help people cope with increased use of leisure and to use it creatively? Will preachers be increasingly preaching to empty pews? Or will worship and preaching help people celebrate life, express the broad range of man's distinctively human capacities, and draw people together in the sacredness of community?

New Authority and Communication Structure. Critics of preaching as a communication tool today have pointed out that preaching emerged in a time when the authority structure was vastly different, when the true and able Christian preacher was perhaps the most significant man in his community. But that has changed. In today's society the scientist, engineer, psychiatrist, banker, and others occupy more prestigious positions in the eyes of the world. Clyde Reid writes

³⁴Edward Higbee, Farms and Farmers in an Urban Age (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1963), p. 9.

³⁵Educational News Bulletin (Newton, Kan., Summer 1966), 12.

about the fate of the minister:

His isolation is gone, the competition for time, information, and entertainment is intense, and his competence even in his special area of expertise may be challenged by his listeners. The narrowed gap in both formal education and experience may be the most crucial factor in this changed authority structure. Many parishioners not only have bachelor's degrees and Ph.D.'s, but they have instant access to information from all over the world....In addition, many parishioners have traveled widely in America and abroad, and have had first hand experience of the world at large which their minister may not have shared.³⁶

The writings of Marshall McLuhan have called attention to a new communication structure in our time of the multi-media, that man now learns, feels, and thinks differently than he did before the advent of electronic communication.³⁷ Ross Snyder has described it as a new era of man:

A new species of man is being produced by the history of our time and the revolution in communications. A new way of sensing life and growing meanings, of organizing life world, of being-in-the world has come with electronic communication. A new mode of human consciousness is arising. We need to operate within it, and minister to it....As contrasted with the consciousness produced by the printed page, by realistic face-to-face communication, and by first hand experiencing, man will become increasingly a new type of mind.³⁸

Clyde Reid sees implications for preaching in this "new age" and to this "modern man" in the need to find means of communication that will reach people "through all the senses at once" and the need for a variety of methods to communicate. Modern man is increasingly

³⁶ Clyde Reid, The Empty Pulpit (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 54.

³⁷ Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964).

³⁸ Ross Snyder, The Ministry of Meaning (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1961), pp. 9-10.

impatient with the structures in which he is only a passive spectator, and "learns much more through actual experiences than through hearing speeches, logical propositions, or doctrinal formulations."³⁹

That General Conference pastors have encountered the communication problem in preaching is evident from the responses to question D.4 of the questionnaire. Thirty-nine, or 22 percent of 182 pastors specifically mentioned this as their greatest concern about preaching, while the communication problem was implied in many of the other responses.⁴⁰ Only as the dialogical principle along the lines described by Reuel Howe⁴¹ comes to be built into our preaching, will it have a chance of being authentic communication to modern man.

Change and Acculturation in the General Conference

In looking at the larger context in which contemporary preaching takes place, we have already called attention to many elements of change in the General Conference. Leland Harder's studies have documented this in areas such as urbanization, occupation, and education. Acceptance of education has heightened the process of acculturation. The 23.9 percent of gainfully employed members of the General Confer-

³⁹Reid, op. cit., pp. 60-61. See also his "Preaching and the Nature of Communication," Pastoral Psychology, XIV:137 (October 1963), 40-49.

⁴⁰Table VI, p. 86.

⁴¹Reuel L. Howe, The Miracle of Dialogue (New York: Seabury Press, 1963), p. 32. See also his, "Opening the Barriers to Communication," Pastoral Psychology XIV:137 (October 1963), 30-32. Howe calls attention to the dialogue principle inherent in the nature of the Scriptures as God's Word and man's response.

ence in professional and technical jobs indicates not only geographical but social, economic, and denominational mobility. Harder's studies indicate that of out-conference transfers to other denominations during 1960-1970 only 15.4 percent joined other Mennonite groups. In the United States 24.1 percent joined United Methodist, 10.8 percent Presbyterian, and 9.1 percent Baptist churches. In Canada 18.8 percent joined the United Church of Canada. Of gainfully employed ex-members 45.3 percent were in the professional and technical occupations, and 24.8 percent of ex-members were college graduates. While the median age of General Conference members is 43.6 years, the median age of ex-members is 33, indicating the mobility of the younger age group. Mobility in the General Conference in terms of education, occupation, and wealth is upward. Harder's study indicates further that the continuing membership of the General Conference is being drained of its most educated, professionally employed, younger members.⁴²

Over the past two generations writers have pointed to trends among Mennonites to complete the sect "cycle" by a "return" to the larger society.⁴³ Paul Peachey, using Erik Erikson's description of identity crisis in adolescence as related to the critical stage in the history of a social group points to the possibility of the disappear-

⁴²Harder, op. cit., pp. 22-29.

⁴³Edmund G. Kaufman, The Development of the Missionary and Philanthropic Interest Among the Mennonites of North America (Berne, Ind.: Mennonite Book Concern, 1931), pp. 45-6, 56.

ance of the cultural base of the Mennonite community.⁴⁴ For in spite of the phenomenal growth of mission and service interest in the General Conference which has 205 Overseas Mission workers, 30 Home Mission workers, and 108 young people in one or two year Voluntary Service assignments,⁴⁵ and participation in a Mennonite Disaster Service organization that has enabled many, young and old, to relate to their heritage and redefine for themselves the meaning of faith as discipleship, these additional involvements with the larger world heighten the acculturation process. The age when a young person would graduate from high school and immediately go back to work on the farm with no further education is dead.

"What will become of the Mennonite Church when it loses its ethnic matrix?" asks Paul Peachey.⁴⁶ The character of our churches will change. So for example, during the past two decades, over fifty new congregations have been started in urban centers to which our people are moving, awareness on the part of some and stimulus to others of the old commission to go into all the world with the gospel. For a group whose membership is 91.7 percent "birthright Mennonite" and whose members from non-Mennonite parentage are only 8.3 percent of the total membership,⁴⁷ the lack of evangelistic outreach is painfully

⁴⁴Paul Peachey, "Identity Crisis Among American Mennonites," Mennonite Quarterly Review, XLII:4 (October 1968), 246.

⁴⁵General Conference, 1970-71 Handbook of Information, pp. 30-35.

⁴⁶Peachey, op. cit., p. 259.

⁴⁷Harder, op. cit., p. 10.

evident. But perhaps out of this scattering can come also a new understanding of the church, and "Mennonite" not as a natural fact, but "Christian" as an act of grace, "Mennonite" not as an ethnic, but as a religious reality. Perhaps out of this scattering can come also a renewed understanding of the believers' church. But this will hardly happen apart from a rediscovery of and emphasis upon the element of grace, the proclamation in our preaching of God's grace in Jesus Christ, a word-action of God which sets us free, and to which we respond in discipleship and mission.

C. SUMMARY: CONTEMPORARY PREACHING IN LIGHT OF HISTORICAL HERMENEUTIC

In this chapter we have looked at preaching in the General Conference Mennonite Church through a study of 193 questionnaires completed by pastors of the General Conference churches. Observations were drawn from these returns about the preaching practice, function and authentication of preaching in the General Conference.

Preaching continues to play a central part in the worship service of most General Conference churches. The major sources of preaching are the Scriptures, church year, contemporary issues, and pastoral visits. Christian living and discipleship in mission is a major theme. The main concern about preaching among many of the pastors is how a Word of God may be brought to bear upon the recognized or unrecognized needs of the people. This is also the concern of communication and how preaching may serve as a communication tool. Many pastors clearly attempt to involve the congregation in sharing the preaching task, as

well as providing opportunities for response to the preaching.

On the question "What authenticates preaching?" pastors have a high regard for the work of the Holy Spirit in preaching, and the Scriptures as authenticating factor. But there was also widespread recognition that unless the preaching communicates to the hearer at the level of his need, preaching is not effective. Another authenticating factor is the pastor's own "experience of the Gospel." This "inner call" seemed to be rated much more important than the call of the congregation, though in Canadian churches where a practice of calling lay members out of the congregation to preach is still widely practiced, and pastors have had less opportunity for education and theological training, the congregation's call and ordination is a stronger authenticating factor for the preacher. Though research for this dissertation included working with the hearer response to preaching only in a very limited way, studies indicate that the people of the congregations find authentication of preaching in the integrity of the preacher's person and the credibility of the message, indicating a need for pastors to be aware of lay expectation factors regarding preaching, but also of the dangers when the man becomes the message.

In looking at the context for preaching we have tried to recognize the larger setting in which preaching takes place, the pragmatic-empiricism of American thinking, the growing sense of alienation seen in youth attitudes toward middle class society and nationalism, the phenomena of leisure and mobility, and the new authority and communication structure that calls into question preaching as a tool of communication.

Finally, noting the acculturation of Mennonites in terms of urbanization and education, and even in mission, resulting in a breakdown of ethnic identity, we have recognized also the possibilities for a rediscovery of the church as those called to freedom and service through the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Setting this study of contemporary preaching in the General Conference against the background of our historical sketch in Chapter 1, we must now ask: What is the continuity in the General Conference and Anabaptist preaching? What is different? What can we learn about the authentication of preaching?

In trying to understand the essence of Anabaptist hermeneutic we noted that Anabaptism begins with the uplifting experience of conversion, with Christ's call to become a "new creature" as expressed in following, the discipleship of cross bearing, Christian life and witness. The Scriptures are seen as authoritative for the Christian, not only in his relationship to God, or the brotherhood, but in all his relationships of life. The text of Scripture is to be taken seriously, but interpreted according to the sense and spirit of Christ. The Anabaptists, minimizing the role of reason, stressed obedience to the norm of Scripture. But it is the life-giving Spirit of God that turns the written and proclaimed word into God's Word. The fear of subjectivism led them to see the gathered congregation as a testing place of the Spirit, as well as of the interpretation of the Scriptures. Anabaptist preaching, initially motivated by a missionary urgency, took on a hortatory characteristic in the move to consolidate the believers' church into a disciplined body.

Points of continuity with this picture in the General Conference preaching include:

1. The source of preaching. As the Anabaptists used the Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, our study of preaching in the General Conference indicates a view that the Scriptures are still the primary source and authority for preaching, though there is not unanimity in seeing the Scriptures as the source.
2. The theme of discipleship in Christian living indicates a continuation of the hortatory character of Anabaptist-Mennonite preaching, though there is also evidence of a recovery of the earlier Anabaptist missionary witness emphasis.
3. In spite of the move toward a trained professional ministry there is evidence of concern to return or rediscover and utilize aspects of lay preaching in the contemporary scene, the members of the congregation sharing the task of proclamation and witness to the Word.
4. On the question of authentication, the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit were seen as central in Anabaptism and still are, though the preacher's sense of call confirmed by the church, and his Nachfolge Christi in life are also factors that give authenticity to the preaching for the people.

Discontinuity in this picture of preaching today may be seen in the concern about communication raised by so many of the pastors, that sense of frustration about the possibility of communicating in preaching. This may be due to changes in the authority and communication structures today which we discussed under the context of preaching. But it may also point to the heart of the question about authentica-

tion. What today appears to be a dulled hearing, a lethargy in the pew, may be result of a heritage of preaching morality rather than the preaching of the kerygma, that message of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ which comes as offer of life in Christ and the proclamation of the will of God for all mankind. Whereas ministers today worry about communication, in the Anabaptist preaching one senses a "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"⁴⁸ and that burning urgency in the proclamation of a Living Lord, the centrality of Christ and the cross, and suffering if need be in following Christ daily, as Jürg Wagner's hymn from the Ausbund of 1564 expresses:

Christ's servants follow him to death
And give their body, life, and breath
On cross and rack and pyre....
Forsaking gain, forgetting pain,
They enter into life.⁴⁹

That communication appears as the problem in preaching today may be due to the absence of suffering. More fundamentally, it may be due to a gospel without cross and repentance, and interpretation of Nachfolge Christi as Christian living and the expression of service in forms largely acceptable to society. Though there is evidence that the question is being asked with new seriousness in our day: What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ?

A related question may be whether in our churches we can assume that we have a "believers' church." With the strong evidence of an

⁴⁸ 1 Cor. 9:16.

⁴⁹ Jürg Wagner, "He Who Would Follow Christ," in Mennonite Hymnal (Newton, Kan.: Faith and Life Press, 1969), p. 344.

ethnic base for the General Conference, it is a legitimate question whether exhortation is an adequate function of preaching. Must not the Gospel of God's grace through Jesus Christ be preached to liberate people even from their heritage as ground for boasting, before they will be able to respond in faith and follow as disciples of Jesus Christ in their living?

CHAPTER III

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT

AUTHENTICATES PREACHING

In examining Anabaptist-Mennonite hermeneutics in preaching in Chapter One, we have called attention to the strong note of mission in preaching of early Anabaptism. By preaching men were persuaded to repent, accept God's offer of salvation by faith, and be baptized into the church. Looking back to the New Testament and apostolic church for a pattern of discipline and order, their preaching also took on the characteristic of exhortation to Christian living. The call and conduct of the preacher, the authority of the Scriptures (interpreted through Christ), the congregation which both tested the "call" and served as locus for the interpretation of the word of Scripture, and the Spirit at work in all of these were seen as authenticating preaching. An implicit "kingdom theology," focusing on the Nachfolge Christi of the Synoptic Gospels gave formative Anabaptism a strong concern for discipleship in the relationships of the Christian in this world.

In Chapter Two we have described contemporary preaching in the General Conference Mennonite Church, noting the concern of pastors that preaching be the kind of proclamation that brings God's Word (Action) to bear on the recognized and unrecognized needs of people. Again a strong emphasis on Christian living was evident. Major authenticating factors were seen as the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures, the pastor's "experience of the Gospel," and whether the message communicates to the

hearer at the level of his need. We also noted the impact of education on the General Conference, and called attention to several factors in the context (empiricism, alienation with American culture, leisure, Mennonite identity crisis) in which preaching takes place. Finally, in evaluating contemporary preaching in light of historical hermeneutic, a question was raised about the adequacy of hortatory preaching and the relationship of Nachfolge Christi and the kerygma.

Having inquired into the authentication of Anabaptist-Mennonite preaching historically and in the contemporary setting, this third and final chapter will begin with that question about the relationship of proclamation and discipleship, for in this study we are asking the question of "What authenticates preaching" in the context of the discipleship understanding of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. It should be remembered that the Anabaptists were not highly conscious of being theological thinkers. Anabaptism was not the unfolding of a new logical or theological position, but rather expressed a different concern for integrity in practice.¹

But this chapter will include also further analysis of the factors in preaching, the Scriptures, preacher, congregation, Spirit, and world. For our purpose is to understand more fully what and how each contributes to the authentication of preaching, as well as their relationship. For the central question remains: What authenticates preaching? What gives authority, validity, the ring of saving truth to

¹John Howard Yoder, "Hermeneutics of the Anabaptists," Mennonite Quarterly Review, XLI:4 (October 1967), 292.

preaching?

A. PROCLAMATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

To ask the question of authenticity in preaching, is to ask for a theology of proclamation. What are the objectives and how are they to be accomplished? But even more fundamentally, whose objectives? Our question deals with preaching in and to the Christian community, but also the church's proclamation to the world. How does the church speak to thoroughly secularized man who does not have points of contact with the traditional thought-forms and language of Christian proclamation?

The Word Proclaimed

As indicated earlier, in Reformation thought the proclamation of the church focused on the theme of redemption, man's alienation from God and his restoration and the interpretation of Christianity primarily as the experience of forgiveness. Emphasis was placed on salvation by grace alone through faith alone; the "hiddenness" of God in creation and his revelation of himself in Christ, and the concept of the Christian as a redeemed sinner. As over against Roman Catholicism's sacramental-hierarchical understanding of the church as the prolongation of God's incarnation in Jesus in the Mass, the Lutheran Protestant tradition has said, "Where the Word is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered, there is the church." However, as understood in most Protestant churches, Baptism and the Lord's Supper are effective only because of the Word, so that central significance is placed on

the Word. Thus Pauck contends that the Protestant tradition really means: "Where the Word is rightly preached and heard, there is the church."² Only when the external words of the sermon and the Bible are inwardly received, only when their own internal meaning--the Gospel, Christ--is appropriated in faith by the listener, only then God becomes real. The hearing of the Word is complete only when the Christ of whom the Bible speaks and of whom the sermon, on the basis of the Bible, bears witness, is an inward Christ. The confrontation with Him which the words of Bible and sermon effect must become a commitment. The Word of God which he is must be appropriated by me so that it becomes part of my life. The Reformers generally described this inward hearing of the Word as the working of the Holy Spirit. The "inner testimony of the Holy Spirit" was a way of speaking of the inner experience of the Word as a divine act, God himself by means of the Bible and of Biblical preaching touching the understanding of the listener in such a way that he applies the message to himself and appropriates it for his own living.³

The Word Lived

At this point it is important to recognize that the other Protestants, as well as the Anabaptists were concerned for moral renewal over against the abuses which had entered Christendom in the Middle Ages. Martin Luther tended to feel this moral renewal would

²Wilhelm Pauck, The Heritage of the Reformation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), pp. 169, 305-6.

³Ibid., p. 170.

follow almost automatically from the restoration of proper preaching, whereas the Anabaptists made it a matter of congregational action. While Luther focused on the issue of man's alienation, and Calvin on the sovereignty of God, the Anabaptists began with the experience of the new birth, the new life in Christ, the new life in the Spirit. Menno Simons' first booklet, "The Spiritual Resurrection" (ca. 1536) is on this "new birth."⁴ This new birth as response to the call of God in Christ meant more than "appropriation" of Christ to heal a man's personal relationship to God, for since Christ is Lord of all, this call and response in obedience affects a man's relationships as well in the believing community and to the unbelieving world.

Bender contends the uniqueness of Anabaptism lies in this conviction that Christ is more than a divine being to be worshiped, more than a Savior who brings forgiveness through the cross and deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. "He is the Lord to be followed and obeyed, and with whom the Christian enters into a covenant that controls his whole life."⁵

The term which the Anabaptists used repeatedly was Nachfolge Christi. By this the Anabaptists meant something definite in experience, including a life which is externally patterned after the New Testament. It is assumed that the life and teachings of Christ are to

⁴Menno Simons, The Complete Writings (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1956), p. 53.

⁵H. S. Bender, "Discipleship," Mennonite Encyclopedia (Scottdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1959), IV, 1076.

be duplicated in principle and in many cases the principle determines the form. Furthermore Christ's message becomes the message of the disciple.

The Lord's ministry of preaching and service, His sweeping rejection of social and political structures, His mobility and freedom from cultural attachments, His eschatological outlook, and His love and nonresistance are accepted as normative for all believers....Christianity is the concrete and realistic "imitation" of Christ's life and work in the context of the kingdom of God.⁶

At this point we must distinguish the Anabaptist concept of Nachfolge Christi from that set forth by Thomas a' Kempis (1380-1471) in his Imitation of Christ.⁷ Thomas lived in an Augustinian monastery in the Low Countries. As priest and monk he counseled obedience, patience, and the "imitation of Christ" by the conquest of the human passions. Self-renunciation and resignation are the highest virtues. The concern is primarily with the inner world of the soul. This type of mysticism is a withdrawal from society. The social dimension is almost completely lacking. There is no criticism of the social or religious order with a view to establishing a Christian order in the brotherhood and church of the living Christ in the midst of the present world. Thomas' "imitation" is more like that of the later Pietists.⁸

⁶J. Lawrence Burkholder, "The Anabaptist Vision of Discipleship," in Guy F. Hershberger (ed.) The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1957), pp. 136-7.

⁷Thomas a' Kempis, The Imitation of Christ (New York: Modern Library, 1943). Written ca. 1424, The Imitation has been translated into more than fifty languages and produced in six thousand editions. The controversy over authorship is discussed in the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1959), XII, 106.

⁸Bender, op. cit., pp. 1076-7.

The Anabaptists had a strong sense of history and of God at work in the world, and of the church suffering in the spirit of Christ, bearing the cross in the world. At the same time the concept of Nachfolge Christi led the Anabaptists to reject historical relativities and to a radical criticism of all historical adaptations to the institutions of society which were regarded as a compromise of the pure Gospel.

Discipleship, the concept of the way of life of the individual believer and of society brought under the Lordship of Christ, makes following or obedience the great word, rather than "faith." Rather than the focus upon the subjective experience of grace and the inner enjoyment of freedom of the Spirit, Anabaptism concentrated on the objective, concrete outward manifestations of the Spirit. The central act of the Gospel is seen as love. In the cross the love of God was manifested for the world. Christ not only commanded love (Luke 10:27), but His life and death on the cross gave love concrete meaning. Love is known supremely in the cross. So the Christian ethic begins with self-giving. Implications of this love ethic have included nonresistance as the way in which the Christian responds to evil, but also the expression of outgoing redemptive love which looks to healing and reconciliation. So also brotherhood and the mutual responsibility of caring for others, as well as the Great Commission are implied.⁹

⁹Burkholder, op. cit., pp. 135-51. Also J. Lawrence Burkholder, "Ethics," ME, IV, 1079-82.

Word and Engagement Theologies

This description of the discipleship concept based on the Lordship of Christ, a practical concern for life in this world, and the suffering church, has seemed necessary to understand Mennonite preaching against the background of contemporary theologies. So for example, we might look at Mennonite preaching in relation to European "Word" theology with the strong note of proclamation on the one hand, and American "engagement" theology characterized by involvement in the life of the world. So we can evaluate Mennonite preaching against the current tension between a concept of the church as kerygmatic and a concept of its purpose as a diakonic response to human need.

Reformation theology, with its strong Word emphasis continues to influence continental thought. Following 19th century historicism which gave rise to an interpretation of Biblical revelation controlled by an immanentist, evolutionary world view, the liberal idea of progress, and historical methods modeled after the empirical methodology of the natural sciences, Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics focused on the absoluteness of God. Barth contended that God's questions, not man's, predominate. Modern man with his questions must not be allowed to fix the framework and write the agenda for theology.¹⁰

Barth's contention that revelation is the central theological question has since been called into question on the basis of whether

¹⁰Carl E. Braaten, History and Hermeneutics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 13.

man's essential predicament is his lack of knowledge, or whether the issue of Christology is not guilt and reconciliation rather than man's ignorance and revelation.¹¹ Barth's approach has also been criticized for a disregard of history, though in later writing the language of history played an increasing role in his thinking.¹² In The Doctrine of the Word of God, Barth outlines the three-fold form of the Word of God as 1) the Word of God as preached, 2) the written Word, and 3) the revealed Word.¹³ Dietrich Ritschl's, A Theology of Proclamation, is based upon this "Trinitarian analogy" of the Word of God.¹⁴

A different kind of "Word" theology is found in the "theology of the kerygma" represented by Rudolf Bultmann. The Greek word, kerygma, meaning proclamation, is used to denote the early Christian proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord, and refers both to the content of that proclamation and to the action of preaching it.¹⁵ Through rigorous application of form criticism to the synoptic problem,¹⁶ and building on Martin Kähler's challenge that the Gospels are a kerygmatic

¹¹Ibid., pp. 15-16.

¹²Ibid., pp. 20-21.

¹³Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), I:1, 98-140.

¹⁴Dietrich Ritschl, A Theology of Proclamation (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), pp. 25-33.

¹⁵Joachim Jeremias, The Problem of the Historical Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 3.

¹⁶Rudolf Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

witness to the risen Christ, and not biographical reports,¹⁷ Bultmann states: "The crucified and resurrected Christ encounters us in the word of preaching, and never in any other way."¹⁸

The preached gospel is not a preparatory instruction which preceded the actual demand for faith, but is, in itself, the call for faith or the challenge to give up one's previous self-understanding...The salvation-occurrence is nowhere present except in the proclaiming, accosting, demanding, and promising word of preaching.¹⁹

Though vigorously criticized for seeing the New Testament primarily through the categories of existentialism, and his apparent disregard for das Historische, the thing that merely happened, in favor of das Geschichtliche, the historic event that becomes significant, Bultmann centered attention on the theology of the kerygma, the early Christian proclamation that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But Bultmann, retreating with his revelation into the area of existential meaning in the historicity of the individual, did not settle the historical problem. Following publication of Ernst Käsemann's essay on "The Problem of the Historical Jesus" in 1954²⁰ others have taken up the concern to establish the continuity that does and must exist between Jesus and the kerygma.

¹⁷Martin Kähler, The So-called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), pp. 65-66.

¹⁸Braaten, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁹Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 301-2.

²⁰Ernst Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," in his Essays on New Testament Themes (London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 15-47.

Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling have done the original work on a development with the accent on language as the basis of reality. The "New Hermeneutic" picks up Bultmann's emphasis on being confronted by the word, and the "later Heidegger" understanding of being as emerging from language. So Fuchs speaks of Sprachereignis (language event) as "setting the text in motion in order to effect love," and Ebeling of Wortgeschehen (word event), "We do not get at the nature of words by asking what they contain, but by asking what they effect, what they set going, what future they disclose."²¹

The Bible bears witness to a proclamation which has taken place and is the impulse to a proclamation which is to take place. And this event, which claims to be the Word of God, is not mere speech. But it sets something in motion, just as it itself was set in motion. It has to do with reality, which it changes.²²

So to believe in Jesus means to reenact the decision of faith which Jesus originally made. Faith is not a partial act. It is the whole man in openness to the future. The Bible understood in its wordness, in its character as reality-bearing language, speaks directly to modern man, giving him a world of linguistic reality within which to find his orientation and claims his life answer as a response. The proclamation of something that took place in the past becomes the present occurrence of the Word. We do not lay hold of the Word, but the Word lays hold of us, the Word interprets us. When this kind of self-

²¹Gerhard Ebeling, Nature of Faith (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), p. 187, cited by Robert W. Funk, Language, Hermeneutic, and the Word of God (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 25, in the chapter, "Language as Event: Fuchs and Ebeling," pp. 47-71.

²²Ebeling, op. cit., p. 183.

understanding has been achieved, then a Word-event has taken place.

In contrast to this focus on "Word" theology and emphasis on the kerygmatic function of the church, contemporary engagement theology, influenced by the importance of the secular, and characterized by involvement in the life of the world, asks with urgency the question: "What does it mean to be the people of God in these circumstances? What form must our life take to be faithful and valid? What do these experiences tell us about the nature and activity of God?"²³

Engagement theology as represented by Harvey Cox' celebration of the "secular city" or Hamilton's assertion that man-come-of-age is prepared to meet and handle his own problems has taken up the "worldly Christianity" theme of Bonhoeffer to celebrate the autonomy that characterizes secularity. It is theological reflection by Christians as they actively confront and seek to bear a valid witness in new secular situations. The good cannot be defined in terms of principles and precepts. It is a question of relationships and acts pointing to opportunities for human fulfillment. Trying to identify the presence and activity of God in the dynamic process of this-worldly existence, engagement theology avoids the sharp distinction between nature and grace which characterized the Reformation theology. Redemption is seen as involving the entire process of the world's history and evolution, rather than the individual's personal relationship to God.²⁴ It has

²³Edward W. Uthe, Theology: An Assessment of Current Trends (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 7.

²⁴Ibid., p. 8.

also exposed the breakdown of traditional God-language as meaningful communication for our time, and the inadequacy of the church's traditional stance toward the world, insisting that we must take seriously all of the world, since all of existence is subject to God's Lordship and is the arena of his activity.

The Anabaptist Mennonite Stance, and Critique

The Anabaptist-Mennonite concern for discipleship witness, the practical expression of faith, belief in the possibility of all relationships to be brought under the Lordship of Christ, a view of following Christ into all the situations of life, might indicate some attraction for or affinity to contemporary engagement theology. Certainly there is a common concern for seeing creation and redemption in a unity. The call to come to Jesus Christ is a call to go into the world.²⁵ The discipleship concern is certainly a diakonic response to human need, a seeking to be open to the opportunities which God opens up at a particular time and place, i.e., Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Disaster Service and a variety of other service programs developed in response to human need. Evident in Mennonite thinking is a rather strong synergistic feeling of being "God's fellow workers."²⁶

On the other hand, Anabaptist-Mennonite awareness that being in the world is necessary, includes also the concern that no meaningful interpretation of the world can be made without the perspective which is

²⁵ John 20:21; Col. 1:15-20; Eph. 1:3-23.

²⁶ 1 Cor. 3:9.

afforded by confrontation with divine revelation within the believing fellowship. At this point we must recognize the significance of the "Word" theology, and the need to keep in balance the Word and world tension and their interrelationship.

Anabaptist-Mennonite distrust in human reason alone, and the concern that understanding takes place only through obedience would call into question engagement theology's optimistic self-understanding and humanistic orientation, and the notion that man is now free to control or create his own destiny.²⁷ Anabaptist-Mennonite synergism must be seen against the primacy of 1 Corinthians 3:11, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," and the crucial role of the believing community, the brotherhood which becomes the "hermeneutic community." Hans Denck's statement that "no man can know Christ unless he follows after him in life," calls attention to the limitations of knowledge, and that only he who is committed to the direction of obedience can read the truth so as to interpret it in line with the direction of God's purposes.²⁸

That is the function of the listening congregation, and of the committed and listening and obedient believer. But it presupposes that there is a Word, and to hear the Word of God means to come to the gath-

²⁷Langdon Gilkey, Naming the Whirlwind (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1969), pp. 256-7. Gilkey adequately exposes the error of our secular self-understanding which takes man's control over natural forces through scientific technology as the model with which man shapes his relation to the historical forces that shape his destiny. However, the application of knowledge in the social context becomes "a moral and political problem, not a problem in engineering."

²⁸Yoder, op. cit., p. 307.

ering around the Word, not primarily to hear the human words of the preacher, but to hear God's Word through the power of the Holy Spirit coming on the vehicle of those human words. One cannot understand Christian obedience without realizing that it involves a prior "hearing" of the Word. Nor can one understand the full implications of hearing the Word without realizing that it must issue in an obedient response. For it is not in man's own obedience, but in the obedience of Jesus that the Christian trusts.²⁹ Obedience should not be seen only or primarily as the way in which one carries out the details of a code or a law. Obedience in the New Testament is a way of referring to the response of faith to Jesus Christ, where in Christ we participate in the obedience of Jesus, through whom we are reconciled to God. It is our decision or answer, our own act of the will in saying yes to him that is so deeply involved in our hearing of the Word.³⁰

The Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition has sought to recognize this interrelatedness of proclamation and obedient discipleship, and has viewed service as the response of faith active in love. But as "faith apart from works is dead,"³¹ so being in the world may lead to the danger of simply echoing the contemporary situation. In the eagerness to be relevant we may lose the Word because we fail to apprehend its relevance to the world, and we may lose the world because we fail to hear

²⁹Romans 5:19; Phil. 2:8; Rom. 1:5.

³⁰Russell L. Mast, Preach the Word (Newton, Kan.: Faith and Life Press, 1968), pp. 47-49.

³¹James 2:17, 26.

the Word and have anything authentically Christian to say to the world. So these emphases must continue to be kept in proper balance: reconciliation as proclamation of the work of God in Christ, and genuine involvement in the world as an embodiment and consequence of that proclamation.

Preaching is proclamation of the good news of the Gospel. It is declaration of what God has done and what He has done supremely in Jesus Christ. But so also it must be clear that proclamation of the Word involves the hearing, and must issue in the doing of the Word. Discipleship is the consequence of preaching, even as the Christian life means being something before it means doing something. Discipleship is a consequence of submitting life to the Lordship of Christ. So the order is clear,³² and the implication for preaching in the Mennonite Church is summed up by Russell Mast:

Preaching does have its prophetic, didactic, and pastoral emphasis which cannot be overlooked. Nor does this mean that the apostolic kerygma will have to be made explicit in every sermon. Yet it will be implicit in every sermon, and it will be explicit in more of our sermons than is currently the case. Is it unfair to suggest that the kerygma is too often the missing note in Mennonite preaching? It is the kerygma that delivers preaching from being moralistic and humanistic. It is the kerygma that insures it against the charge of being "an annoying harangue."³³

B. FACTORS IN PREACHING - THEIR ROLE AND RELATIONSHIP

Having tried to understand the nature of Mennonite preaching

³²Romans 10:14-15 or Matthew 28:19-20.

³³Russell L. Mast, "Preaching and the Bible," paper read at the Pastor's Seminar, Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind. on November 1, 1968, p. 8.

against the background of contemporary Word and engagement theologies, particularly the relationship of proclamation and discipleship, we turn now to specific analysis of the factors in preaching already referred to in Chapters One and Two. What roles do the Scriptures, preacher, congregation, Spirit, and world have in authenticating preaching? In examining each of the factors we become aware of their interrelationship. Yet we need to try to identify what each contributes to the authentication of preaching and how.

The Scriptures

In Anabaptist history, the test of true preaching was whether it was Scriptural or not. Recognizing the danger of subjectivism, the Scriptures served as authority, as the word by which man's faith and conduct could be tested. But the test was "the Scriptures interpreted through Christ."

That the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures continue as a primary source for faith in the Mennonite Church was borne out in the questionnaire study of General Conference pastors reported in Chapter Two. This fact is also emphasized by the first sentence in the Basic Faith Statement of the Constitution:

The General Conference believes in the divine inspiration and infallibility of the Bible as the Word of God and the only trustworthy guide of faith and life; and in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11).³⁴

In 1962 a General Conference Study Commission on the Inspira-

³⁴ See Appendix A.

tion of the Scriptures prepared a statement on "The Authority of the Scriptures." Though motivated at least partially by tensions resulting from the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy, the statement reflects also the new awareness among Mennonites that the early Anabaptist movement was "the result of a discovery of the Word of God and authoritative in all matters of faith and practice."³⁵ But it reflects also an awareness that hermeneutics is the question in modern theology. And for a people who claim to base their total position on Biblical revelation, the question is of utmost importance.

How do the Scriptures help men hear the God Word of salvation today in a secularized society for whom the Bible has become an archaic historical document, but no longer authority for life? Obviously, no shallow Biblicism, no appeal to volume of Scripture reference or careful marshaling of Scripture proof will satisfy. In what sense is the Bible God's Word to man? Operating from two bases, the Bible and modern life, every Christian who witnesses to the faith is confronted with this need to bridge a gap in continuity. That is the hermeneutical problem which includes exegesis, the detailed specific explication of the text, "What does the text say?" as well as the meaning, "What does the text say?"

Though it is not the purpose of this study to give a history of Bible interpretation, we need to note that the Bible has spoken to later generations through a variety of approaches before we look at several specific questions dealt with or arising out of the Anabaptist-

³⁵See Appendix F.

Mennonite understanding and use of the Scriptures.

Hermeneutical Approaches. In bridging the gap from the Bible to modern life several "air routes" have been used which largely ignore or attribute little significance to intervening years.³⁶ Rabbinic Judaism's solution was to understand the Old Testament as a guide for life, valid in detailed application to subsequent ages. The words spoken to the Israelites in Moses' or Jeremiah's time were to be heard by Jews living centuries later as if spoken to them. The effort to adapt the Biblical statements to later needs resulted in the Midrash, Talmud, and other Rabbinic literature. Though taking the Scriptures with utmost seriousness the result was a fragmentation of the Scriptures. The profound concept of God's grace during the Exodus and resultant covenant relationship between God and Israel was often lost sight of as the small segments of Scripture were asked to yield self-contained meanings to be carried over to limited areas of later life. Out of the Law became laws.³⁷

The Post-Reformation concern with the Word, placing the Bible into the center of church and personal life has often led to such a fragmented distribution and use of Scriptures. This has been a partic-

³⁶This classification of hermeneutical approaches as "air" and "land" routes is suggested in an essay by Waldemar Janzen, "The Meaning of the Bible for Today" (Mimeographed Canadian Mennonite Bible College, February, 1968), pp. 1-4.

³⁷W. D. Davies, Introduction to Pharisaism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967). Davies cautions against oversimplification noting that Rabbinic Judaism at its best is an ongoing dialogue between the Bible and later times.

ular temptation in the Mennonite tradition. The focus on Christian living, appeal to the Scriptures as norm, and an unsophisticated Bibli-cism has resulted frequently in an overlooking of the Bible's great themes in favor of short units which have been used in a do-don't application in a moralistic legalism.

Another approach, represented in Philo's attempt to interpret Judaism to the Greek world was to look for the hidden "spiritual" meanings in the concreteness of the Bible's stories and words. This "allegorical" method dominated Bible interpretation during the Middle Ages.³⁸ But detachment of the "truth" contained in a Biblical text from the concrete details of the text has also been prevalent in Protestant Liberalism of the past century with its readiness to detach truths as the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man, or to read the "mind of Jesus" as over against the details of what he said and did. At this point even Bultmann's "demythologizing,"³⁹ the concern to make the Bible applicable to modern man by confronting him existentially with the Biblical truth so as to lead him to "authentic existence," appears to fall into the trap of detaching universal truth from time-bound specifics. So modern theology is questioning a kerygma detached from

³⁸Robert M. Grant, "History of the Interpretation of the Bible," Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), I, 107-114.

³⁹Bultmann's provocative essay of 1941, "The New Testament and Mythology" may be found in Hans Werner Bartsch. (ed.) Kerygma and Myth (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 1-44. A later statement and reply to objections is found in Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

its historical basis and content.⁴⁰

Though striving for wholeness, the vulnerability of the "detachable truth" approach arises from the fact that it departs from the Biblical medium. In abandoning the confessional recital of the acts of God in the history of Israel, of Jesus Christ, and of the church in favor of philosophically formulated truths it opens the door to the prevailing philosophies whether Neo-platonism, Idealism, or Existentialism.⁴¹

Though Anabaptist interpretation of the Scriptures has not been immune from the allegorical method (notably Melchior Hofmann), it is clear that as a rule they were concerned about taking seriously the simple reading of the text, as for example the words and commands of Jesus. Against the charge of literalism they left room for what they called "the character of Scripture," recognizing the meaning which a total passage has in its context.⁴² Furthermore, as Walter Klaassen has pointed out, they took a historical view of the Bible, viewing "the drama of God's redemption as a process, initiated in particular with Abraham, and moving forward to a climax in Jesus Christ, in whom God would conclude human history."⁴³

This brings us to another kind of hermeneutical approach, the

⁴⁰Braaten, op. cit., pp. 26-27.

⁴¹Janzen, op. cit., p. 2.

⁴²Yoder, op. cit., p. 297.

⁴³Walter Klaassen, "The Bern Debate of 1538: Christ the Center of Scripture," MQR, XL:2 (April 1966), 152.

"ground route" of history. Growing out of the Enlightenment, the work of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) and Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) provided a view of history as the education of man through successive divine revelations. Hegel saw the past, including the Biblical past, linked to the present through a continuous process of historical movement. Building on this optimistic view of history as an educative process, Vatke and Wellhausen made historical development the dominant answer to the question of the meaning of the Bible. So Bonhoeffer's "man come of age" and Harvey Cox' analysis of man's movement from tribal society to town culture to secular city have been seen in the same light.⁴⁴

Though the ground route connection between Bible and present via history ties Biblical history and the history within which we stand into one movement, making us a part of the process proclaimed in the Bible, it has been challenged as being based on an optimistic evolutionary view of history and the liberal idea of progress. It has also not dealt adequately with the relation between sacred history and universal history.

Another "ground route" approach is associated with the term Heilsgeschichte or salvation history. Traced to J. C. K. von Hofmann and the "Erlangen School" of the nineteenth century, and having undergone numerous modifications, it is a view according to which history is tied to the continuing redemptive activity of God. It focuses on "the confessional recital of the redemptive acts of God in a particular

⁴⁴Janzen, op. cit., p. 4.

history."⁴⁵ This sacred history has Jesus Christ at its midpoint, as the mightiest of God's acts. Through this special history of Israel and the Christian Church God is calling the world to participate in salvation.⁴⁶ Heilsgeschichte, as seen in Von Rad's promise-fulfillment scheme,⁴⁷ has been a helpful way of grasping the indispensable role of the Old Testament for Christian faith, and for relating it to the New. Heilsgeschichte has also contended that the kerygma is linked to history, thus avoiding the dichotomy of kerygma and history as posed by Bultmann.

Pannenberg, in seeking to answer the hermeneutical problem in terms of a theology of world history has sought to move beyond Heilsgeschichte, charging that it has failed to show how revelation and his-

⁴⁵G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts (Chicago: Allenson, 1952), p. 13. See also Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology," in Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), I, 423, 428.

⁴⁶Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time (London: SCM Press, 1965). Cullmann has given us the familiar diagram of universal history to particular to universal again, the world, the people of Israel, the remnant, the servant (Christ), the church, and the world. Of particular significance has been his recognition of how the categories of time and history, rather than essence, nature, and eternal or existential truth are the ones within which the New Testament moves. Here see also John Marsh, The Fulness of Time (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952) for a helpful delineation of two concepts of time in the Bible, chronos or linear time, and chairoi, "realistic" time, time distinguished by its content.

⁴⁷Gerhard von Rad, "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament," Claus Westermann, Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1969), p. 27. Von Rad speaks of the Old Testament as "a history of the creative Word of God, that is, a course of history is described which is determined by a whole pattern of mutually corresponding prophetic promises and divine fulfillments."

tory are connected. Pannenberg, contending that revelation comes not only in and through history but as history, proposes a theology of universal history:

The hermeneutical difference between the traditional texts and our present time would be at once respected and superceded in a concept of the history connecting both, if this history can be regarded as the work of the Biblical God.⁴⁸

A Viable Hermeneutic. Simply to list such a variety of approaches to the meaning of Scriptures is to indicate the seriousness of this struggle to find or appropriate the meaning of the Word of the Scriptures for each generation. Today we also recognize that no single pattern of interpretation can deal with all the texts which reflect a wide variety of concerns, i.e., historical, existential, Christological.

In trying to arrive at a viable hermeneutic for preaching today in the Mennonite Church, we will consider several points of significance in Anabaptist-Mennonite understanding and use of the Scriptures, including taking history seriously, the use of the Old Testament, the centrality of Christ, and significance of the hermeneutic community.

Of the approaches outlined above, it is this writer's opinion that Mennonite interpreters today are strongly influenced by the ground route approach of Heilsgeschichte.⁴⁹ As Gordon Kaufman has

⁴⁸Wolfhart Pannenberg, "The Crisis of the Scripture Principle in Protestant Theology," Dialog, II (1963), 312.

⁴⁹Howard H. Charles, God and His People (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1969). Also Clayton Beyler, Salvation History Score Card, (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1968). These were used in the adult education study, "The Story of God and His People."

recently pointed out, "Insofar as the knowledge of God is historical in kind, we are dependent directly upon the Bible as the record of that history in which he became known."⁵⁰ It is the Bible that contains the principal documentary remains from the history in and through which man's understanding of what we call God developed. The documents collected in the Bible were written, edited, and assembled to portray God's dealings with man (particularly Israel and the early Church) and man's dealings with God.

As indicated earlier, the Anabaptists did focus on the historical character of revelation. The Old Testament with its Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants they viewed as preparatory, as paving the way for the final and complete revelation in Jesus Christ. Though rejecting the Old Testament as a final standard for Christian obedience it did not mean they paid no attention to it. The Bible did not consist for them of two separate sections, but the Old Testament was also the Word of God. The relationship of the New Testament to the Old is not one of rejection but of fulfilment. So it was the New Covenant as the new and final revelation of God in Christ that provided the key to understanding the Old Testament.⁵¹

⁵⁰Gordon D. Kaufman, "What Shall We Do With the Bible?" Interpretation, XXV:1 (January 1971), 95.

⁵¹Klaassen, op. cit., 152-3. See also Yoder, op. cit., pp. 306-7. Yoder points to the deeper question of the relationship of God's purposes to history. Is truth ultimately timeless, or "do we understand God's purposes to be working themselves out through history so that a meaningful movement from the Old Testament to the New can be a fundamental part of God's plan?" This is the issue of salvation history versus Platonism, or Hebraic thought versus Greek.

Christ was for them the center of Scripture. Any specific word in the Bible stands or falls depending upon whether it agrees with Jesus Christ or not. What God did in Christ is his final word to men, and therefore what Christ, who was perfectly obedient to the will of his Father, said and did, is simply God's demand.⁵²

In looking at the life of the New Testament Church as a pattern for brotherhood in Christ, they noted that the early Christian community had seen in Jesus Christ that which was central and normative for understanding God and life. Jesus' teachings on love and forgiveness of enemies, his attitudes of acceptance and respect toward the lowly and outcast, his actions of forgiveness and healing, and his own willingness to accept personal suffering and crucifixion rather than violently resist those who opposed him became a living symbol of God's character and his mode of dealing with sinful mankind. Consequently men needed only to respond in gratitude and love, giving themselves to each other with the same love in which God gave himself to them, and they would realize their authentic humanity (salvation) and God would be in their midst.⁵³ This presupposes a Living Lord through whom men become new creatures and members of the community of the Spirit.

Anabaptism insisted on the normative character of the Scriptures as interpreted through Christ, and the profound conceptions of forgiveness, reconciliation, and love. So Robert Friedmann insists Anabaptism gave Western man "an object lesson in what man can do as a Christian.

⁵²Klaassen, op. cit., 153.

⁵³Kaufman, op. cit., p. 107.

There was brotherly love...a lesson on how to live together creatively ...a demonstration in how to realize peace and harmony in a world of unrest, much hatred and conflicts."⁵⁴ To take the Scriptures and the way of forgiveness, reconciliation, and love as normative raises of course the problem of obedience. Menno Simons challenged all to take a lesson in obedience from the prophets and holy apostles, to bring forth faith "which comes by the Word of God," bears fruit, and leads into righteousness, causing men to submit willingly in all obedience.⁵⁵

It must of course be recognized that when discipleship moves to the center there is always the danger that the imitation-of-Christ ideal supplants the Pauline emphasis of God at work within us, and Christ being formed within. Focus on discipleship always has a tendency toward anthropocentrism and insistence on the letter. To counter the charges of "Biblicism" the Anabaptists spoke of the "Inner Word" and "Outer Word," that a Biblical text without the penetration and testing of personal appropriation through the Spirit is a dead letter.⁵⁶ And the Spirit's locus of activity is through the integrity and obedience of the listening congregation, the hermeneutic community.

The hermeneutic community is based on the rule of Paul: "Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said," (1 Corinthians 14:29) and the rule of Christ: "If your brother sins

⁵⁴Robert Friedmann, "The Anabaptists and We," Mennonite Life, XXII:3 (July 1967), 100.

⁵⁵Menno Simons, op. cit., p. 267, 306.

⁵⁶Yoder, op. cit., 298.

against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone... For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:15-20) A text is best understood in a congregation. The Spirit is an interpreter of what a text is about only when Christians are gathered in readiness to hear it speak to their current needs and concerns. This conception of the congregation listening to the Word of God implies that the common man becomes a full member of the church, is a safeguard against all kinds of visionary enthusiasm, and understands the gathered congregation as part of the salvation history. The context for the discernment of what Scripture says to us is not scholarly objectivity but brotherly involvement. This is not to depreciate the need for the preacher to be faithful in historic-philological exegesis, but to recognize that at the center of being the church of Jesus Christ is the gathering to discern and to do the will of God. "Most of the characteristics of Anabaptist hermeneutic practice center around this issue--the integrity and obedience of the listening congregation, the committed and listening believer."⁵⁷

Summarizing, what may we say about the Scriptures in authentication of preaching? Mennonites have seen the Scriptures as authoritative for faith and life. But where is that authority? John's words concerning the purpose of his gospel, "...these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name," are words that might apply to the whole of the Scriptures. The Bible is a witness. The Scriptures

⁵⁷Ibid., 300-308.

point to something beyond man. The authority of the Scriptures lies in that to which it bears witness. It is in their witness to the action of God in history, the event of Christ the Living Lord, the condition of man, and the meaning of life within the community of the Spirit, but for the whole world, that the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures become a primary and authentic source for preaching in the church.

How do the Scriptures authenticate the preaching? As Word of God to men in that to whom they bear witness. But it will be true in the context of the church primarily that men will find in the Scriptures the source for knowledge of God and witness to Jesus Christ. Ultimately of course it is the Living Lord through the presence of the Spirit who authenticates the Scriptures to the obedient listener in the preaching. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

The Preacher

What is the role of the preacher in authenticating the preaching? Does the preacher in any way authenticate and give authority to the preaching? Where does authentication come for the preacher? Let us consider the call and ordination, and also the preacher as person.

The Call to Preach and Ordination. General Conference pastors reported the overwhelming factor in influencing their preaching was their "own experience of the Gospel." Within our tradition there has been concern about both an inner call (by God or the Spirit) and the outer call (through the congregation), not simply that the church con-

firm an inner call, but that the church as vehicle of the Spirit also initiate the call.⁵⁸ In our tradition of believer's baptism the vow of baptism has also included the pledge to serve, so that baptism itself has been seen as a kind of "ordination into the mission of the church," including the task of proclamation.⁵⁹

A frequent charge against the Anabaptists was that their church was not a church because it did not stand in the true succession from the apostles through the papal church, and therefore its ministers were not truly called. Not standing in the true succession meant that they lacked the authority of God. But for the Anabaptists it was not a question of outward succession, but of living "according to the order of Christ," i.e., only those belong to the church who have repented of their sins, confessed faith in Christ, and in baptism promised obedience to him.⁶⁰

As the church professes to be the Body of Christ her ground of being is in her Lord, and her preaching is about her Lord, about the self-revelation of God in Christ, and the meaning of his death and resurrection. The church whose preaching is oriented about the Bible carries on the tradition of proclamation of her forbears, what Isaiah and Jeremiah, what Peter, Paul and John preached about. This growing community of proclamation is what constitutes the church's true apos-

⁵⁸Clayton Beyler, The Call to Preach (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1963), p. 14.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 35.

⁶⁰Klaassen, op. cit., p. 154.

tolic succession of faith and loyalty to the Great Commission. It is a succession of obedience, not of the bishop's office.⁶¹

With this kind of understanding of call and baptism and obedience, ordination has been understood not in a sacerdotal as much as in a functional sense. C. J. Dyck, in a series of theses concerning ordination, recently suggested that:

Within the context of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers ordination does not confer a special status, neither establishes a separate class of Christians, but represents a division of labor within the brotherhood for the orderly and effective conduct of the affairs of the local congregation... Ordination does not confer miraculous power or particular grace upon the candidate but represents the united prayers of the congregation that God may bless, use, and strengthen the brother in the duties he is about to assume...⁶²

That ordination has been misunderstood by pastors and people at times is evident. But this view of ordination attempts to safeguard the fact that proclamation of the Gospel is the mutual responsibility of the congregation. Ordination does not authenticate the preaching except as it is the witness of the congregation (or the congregations represented) in prayerful support of the minister.

The increased tendency to rely on the inner call to prompt young people to volunteer for ministry in the church, and less inclination of congregations to call out of their own midst young people for the preaching task, suggests that congregations need to find new ways

⁶¹Clarence Bauman, "The Bible--Its Origin, Nature, and Authority," Mennonite Life, XIX:2 (April 1964), 57.

⁶²Cornelius J. Dyck, "Some Theses Concerning Ordination," (paper read at the Joint Faculty Meeting, Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, April 30, 1962, Elkhart, Ind.), pp. 5, 7.

to help young people hear and experience and respond to the call to "Preach the Word."

The Preacher as Person. Philips Brooks' definition of preaching as "truth through personality" is suggestive of an important factor in preaching, the preacher as person. We have already referred to Menno Simons' high concern for obedience as expressed in the life style of the interpreter of the Word. So also in calling attention to "lay expectation factors" in preaching we have recognized that the sincerity, integrity, and strong personal faith of the preacher may be an important authenticating factor to the hearer.

Earl H. Ferguson has indicated that listening to sermons for nearly twenty years has convinced him "that persuasion in preaching depends, not so much upon what a preacher knows as upon who he is. His success as a 'Servant of the Word' is a function of the quality of his life."⁶³ Evelyn Underhill contends "the basic thrust of the Christian ministry is not contained in the words of the sermon, but rather in what the minister is in himself."⁶⁴

To recognize this is to run the risk of the message being judged by the man, of seeing the message only as authentic as the messenger. Such thought can only further heighten the role conflict of the minister. But to share oneself from the pulpit is to share all of

⁶³Earl H. Ferguson, "Psychology and Preaching," Pastoral Psychology, XIV:137 (October 1963), 6.

⁶⁴Evelyn Underhill, quoted by Albert L. Meiburg, in James T. Hall "Measuring the Communication of Feeling in Worship," Pastoral Psychology, XIV:137 (October 1963), 56.

oneself. The concern is that the nature of preaching demands that it come out of the very being of the preacher's own encounter with the Word, the needs of men, and his experience of life in obedience. Men for whom preaching becomes a "professional exercise" rather than growing out of a vocational view of ministry will not have the ring of authenticity. Nor will the preaching if the life style of the minister denies the powerful realities of the Gospel.

But there is an extreme danger here. No life of itself is adequate to authenticate the preaching. So the Old Testament prophets had to deal with the question of authority, the authenticity of their message, which as they made clear, did not come from themselves but was by authority of the Lord. "Behold, I have put my words in your mouth."⁶⁵ Paul identifies himself as "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God," and makes clear the caution necessary for every preacher lest the message be identified as coming from the person. "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified...that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."⁶⁶ Or again, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us."⁶⁷

A helpful analysis of the preacher as witness and herald has been given by Dietrich Ritschl who points out that man's call into

⁶⁵Jeremiah 1:9; Isaiah 6:1-9; Amos 7:14-15.

⁶⁶1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

⁶⁷2 Corinthians 4:7.

"witness-ship" is grounded in the call of Jesus Christ. A witness (martyrs) is one who tells what he has seen, who testifies to what he has heard, and the herald (keryx) is a messenger sent to proclaim and announce the coming of the king. So "the herald of God has nothing but the Word on which to rely. He is called in Jesus Christ and authorized by Him; he has His Word and nothing else to support his legitimacy."⁶⁸

It is true that as the preacher's person expresses a Nachfolge Christi, there is opportunity of contact of the Word with the world. To many people preaching will have the ring of authenticity only as the preacher can speak the truth in love, and has a life style that reflects the joy and the concern of the Gospel. Most effective preaching takes place within the context of a relational ministry. In this sense the pastor's life becomes an accompaniment of the Word. But always we must be aware of the danger of seeing the preacher's sincerity, credibility, or exemplary life as the authenticating factor. For preaching must point beyond the preacher's person to Christ, to the Living Lord. Always it must be clear that the message is not the man, the message is the Lord's. The Lord gives the message through the man. The preacher in word and deed is only the sign, pointing beyond himself to the Lord. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

⁶⁸Ritschl, op. cit., p. 63.

The Congregation

If the preacher's contribution to preaching is in his own experience of the Gospel, and his response in word and life by bringing his knowledge of the whole range of the Scriptures and of the interpretation of them to bear at the point of the needs among his people as he senses them, the congregation provides the hearing for the proclamation of Gospel, but as the Body of Christ brought into being by the Word of the Living Lord, she is also the proclaimer of the Word. What are the roles of the congregation in preaching and in the authentication of preaching?

As Hearer of the Preaching. As already indicated in discussing the understanding of the Scriptures in preaching, the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition has emphasized the importance of the listening, believing, and obedient community. Preaching is carried on in the context of the gathering, the ekklesia of the New Testament and the qahal of the Old Testament. The congregation as the hermeneutic community is seen as those who are prepared to assume the responsibility of hearing and obedience, the response of faith in Jesus Christ. The context of preaching includes the congregation gathered at a specific time and place in worship of her Lord, as well as the parish, those persons over whom a minister has a pastoral oversight.

In the General Conference Mennonite Church it cannot be assumed, as the Anabaptists were inclined to do, that the church is made up of Christians who have all experienced the rebirth of the Gospel.

A survey of students at Bethel and Bluffton Colleges in 1965 indicated that 29.6 percent of General Conference young people attending these schools had been baptized by the age of thirteen, and 38.7 percent more were baptized at the age of fourteen to fifteen.⁶⁹ Many young people at this early age are not ready to make the kind of commitment consistent with a "believer's church" ideal. But even for Christians whose commitment to Christ's way of discipleship and service through the church is made in good faith, at any age, this faith must be nurtured, as persons try to find what is their authentic existence in the experiences of their life.

So a wide range of needs is represented in the gathering of a congregation, the need for a sense of permanence and belonging, of meaning and purpose, in an existence that is marked by transience, alienation, and fragmentation. Concomitant with these needs of fear and anxiety, are the needs of the proud, self-righteous, and complacent, the guilt (both personal and social), as people struggle to find meaning in the relationships of family, neighborhood, work, nation, and world. Here are people who must hear words of judgement, grace, forgiveness, hope, and be helped to celebrate their life with joy. The sermon, as it is based on the Biblical witness and points to God's acts in Christ, confronts the church. As the word which comes from God to the church it brings life, light, and truth of God, creating new hearts and lives, creating the church.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Educational News Bulletin (Newton, Kan., Summer, 1966), 7.

⁷⁰Ritschl, op. cit., p. 69.

Consequently not only an assemblage of individuals is represented by the congregation. Here is also a community of the Spirit, a body representing and in varying degrees expressing the corporate character of life. Bound by Christ in love, it is through this body that love may be given expression in corporate action of the church as well as give encouragement to the individual Christian in the attempt to live out faith meanings in the dilemmas of the day. So the congregation, hearing the proclamation of Gospel, must also hear encouragement and be helped to respond in a witness of Christian living and service.

As Proclaimer. In speaking about the church, we have used the term "congregation," for in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition the congregation, the local, visible body of believers has been seen as the primary unit of the church. Authority rests in the gathering of the congregation around the Word. But there must also be recognition of the larger church, the historical church which has been brought into being through Jesus Christ and whose mission has been and is the proclamation of Christ. Even though the historical church and tradition dare not be equated with the Living Lord, we do not simply step out of the tradition. As Ritschl has indicated:

The preacher was brought up in the Church, educated by the Church or at least influenced by books written by church men, and his Sunday sermon is only possible because he was already a member of the Church on Saturday. The Church therefore creates the sermon.⁷¹

⁷¹Ibid., p. 69.

The role of the church (or congregation) as proclaimer includes 1) the church's giving and preserving the Biblical witness to the Living Lord to this day, 2) the congregation's helping men hear the call to preach and confirming that call, including the training of preachers, and 3) as the hermeneutic community, the listening and obedient congregation, it is the locus of the Spirit's work in discerning the will of God ("it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us")⁷² and in proclamation of it.

As the church participates in the ministry of Christ, the preacher cannot be left alone with his sermon preparation. He can only preach having heard the Word, but he cannot hear the Word in isolation from his people. In recognizing the new authority structure of our day we have already stressed the need for dialogical preaching. How can the congregation help the preacher in the preaching task?

Reuel Howe has given guidelines for feedback groups in Partners in Preaching;⁷³ and Browne Barr in Parish Backtalk⁷⁴ shares the sermon seminar approach in which a group of parishioners meet with the minister one evening a week to wrestle with the text and issues of the sermon. Clyde Reid, in giving proposals for worship that move "beyond preaching," lifts up the Quaker practice that combines the spiritual power of silence, the mutual witnessing of all the members, and cour-

⁷²Acts 15:28.

⁷³Reuel Howe, Partners in Preaching (New York: Seabury Press, 1965).

⁷⁴Browne Barr, Parish Backtalk (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 76-82.

ageous action in the form of sacrificial service to the world.⁷⁵

It is at this point that our tradition may have a great deal to say to the manner of preaching in our churches. For Anabaptism the locus of the living Word was not in an office or a man, but in the congregation. So it has been natural that Mennonites have had a strong tradition of "lay ministry," in which there may have been preaching by one or by several, group singing, short statements, sharing, or active discussion of a troubled point, for the final end of preaching has been seen as the edification of the church and the enlargement of her witness. In Anabaptism the minister is "chaplain to the lay folk, who carry the faith, who are in the world witnessing."⁷⁶

But a recovery of the meaning and use of this Gespräch (discussion) is needed in contemporary Mennonite congregations that the people themselves become involved in the discussion and process of defining the Christian witness. For the Word becomes a true Word only at the moment of communication, at the point when the outer Word makes contact with life. Genuine preaching must be the authentic and mutual witness of all the people of God, sharing with each other their experiences of God's presence in their lives. The whole people of God share the responsibility to proclaim the good news to each other and to their worlds.

In what sense then does the congregation authenticate the

⁷⁵Clyde Reid, The Empty Pulpit (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 118.

⁷⁶Franklin Littell, A Tribute to Menno Simons (Scottdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1961), pp. 60-1.

preaching? As the church assists in confirming the call and serves as locus of the Spirit's authentication. But at the same time the congregation must be seen as created by the preaching, and confronted by the preaching. So the congregation too must stand under the Word, as she owes her existence to the Living Lord. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

The Spirit

Throughout this study reference has already been made to the Spirit's role in authenticating preaching. We noted that the Anabaptists had a strong view of the Spirit at work in the call of the minister, and as finding expression through the Word of Scriptures and the consensus of the believing community. In the study of contemporary preaching in the General Conference we noted the pastors giving the Spirit the highest rating of factors that authenticate preaching. Again the pastors called attention to the Spirit at work through Scriptures, preacher, congregation, and the needs of people. But they also admitted that questions about the Spirit are hard to answer. Is it the Spirit that brings about the miracle that anything at all does happen in that meeting of Word and preacher and congregation in the event of preaching?

This further discussion of the Spirit's role in authenticating preaching is in affirmation of expecting the Spirit's authentication in preaching. But first we must ask: What is meant by the Spirit? In the perspective of the Bible the Spirit has been associated with the concept of power. The Spirit in the Old Testament represented God in

action in His world. Power and Spirit are brought together in Luke's account of the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry (Luke 4:14). The record of Acts is filled with accounts and references to mighty deeds of power, that God was at work through His Spirit is related to the high tide of enthusiasm which characterized primitive Christianity. The Christians were filled with a sense of joy and enthusiasm (Gal. 5:22). Also the gift of the Spirit enabled them to understand the new quality of fellowship, that sense of community described in 1 Corinthians 12:13. The presence of the Spirit meant freedom from sin, freedom to love, to serve, to live (2 Cor. 3:17). The New Testament conveys this conviction that God has fulfilled his promises. The life energy of the Eternal has flowed into the lives of the believers. By the power of God's Spirit men and women become reconciled to God and are made new creatures (1 Cor. 12:3; John 3:6; 2 Cor. 5:17). Life under control of the Spirit is characterized by love, joy, peace (Gal. 5:22-26).

In Christian history belief in the Holy Spirit has been prevalent more as an experience than as a scheme of thought. The Holy Spirit has been a way of speaking of the experience of the immanence of God, and so also of the experience of the indwelling Christ.

In the Protestant focus on the Word there was recognition that the hearing of the Word is complete only when the Christ of whom the Bible speaks and of whom the sermon, on the basis of the Bible, bears witness, is an inward Christ. The Word of God which he is must be appropriated by me so that it becomes part of my life. The Reformers described this inward hearing of the Word as the working of the Holy

Spirit. By the "inner testimony of the Holy Spirit," they saw this inner experience of the Word as a divine act. So as the Word confronts a person he is laid hold of by a power, a life, not of his own producing.⁷⁷

In Anabaptism also, the center of initiative remains with God, not with the inward workings of human intelligence. Because of a view of Scripture, interpreted by the teaching and spirit of Christ as normative, and the kind of "consensus theology" that placed the locus of authority in the sharing and discussion and exhortation of the brotherhood, the Anabaptists were cautious about the Spirit's function as an inner light or as giving direct personal revelation of God. But the caution about excesses of the Spirit did not make the Spirit dispensable. The Spirit, through the Scriptures and the preaching of the brethren, brought life and understanding. It was the Spirit that prepared the ear to hear and the heart to understand. To the Spirit they ascribed the motivation for their repentance or their requesting baptism, for their confessing sins, for their going out to preach and to baptize, and for their confidence that they will be guided by their Lord.⁷⁸ It was the Spirit that became the guide in the Nachfolge Christi, empowering them to bear confident witness to their faith. The essential evidence of being a child of God was not participation in any sacrament, liturgical, or ecclesiastical act, but rather "walking in

⁷⁷Pauck, op. cit., pp. 169-70.

⁷⁸Yoder, op. cit., p. 298.

the will of the Spirit."⁷⁹

This obedience to the Spirit was evidenced by the fruits of the Spirit. The Anabaptists recognized as genuine only that faith "through which the Holy Spirit and the love of God come into the heart, and which is active, powerful and operative in all outward obedience and commanded works."⁸⁰ Rejecting theological views reflecting an anthropology that denied the reality of the Spirit transformed life, they were convinced that the Spirit produced an ontological change within the believer so that he could overcome evil with good, thus demonstrating love in all human relations and thereby giving proof of his faith, for "where love is, there is a Christian."⁸¹

That possibility, no, rather that expectancy that a man can be born of water "and the Spirit" (John 3:5) must be present in our preaching. The expectancy that a man's life can be grasped by the Word and reordered and "made new in the freedom of the Spirit" must always be present in the proclamation and in hearing the preaching. For to take seriously the promise that "when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth," (John 16:13) is to believe that there is a continuing guiding presence of God's Spirit which gives meaning to discipleship in every age.

⁷⁹Peter J. Klassen, "The Anabaptist View of the Holy Spirit," in Cornelius J. Dyck (ed.) The Witness of the Holy Spirit (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite World Conference, 1967), p. 243.

⁸⁰Pilgram Marpeck, Verantwortung, quoted in H. S. Bender, "Walking in the Resurrection," MQR, XXXV:2 (April 1961), 101.

⁸¹Menno Simons, op. cit., p. 917.

That preachers should rate the Holy Spirit high in authenticating preaching is understandable. This may have been their way of saying that it is God, Christ, the Living Lord who authenticates. For the preacher knows most keenly the human character of the words in preaching. But after having done all we can to hear the Word in terms of the present moment, and to understand the nature of the Word and to translate it into the situation in life of the hearer as best we can, we must trust that the human word in preaching, energized by God through the Holy Spirit, can become a vehicle of God's Word. It is not the preacher who makes the Word relevant. The Word already is more relevant than we can ever make it. We can, however, as preacher and hearer, by the Holy Spirit, apprehend its relevance for our life. Because the Spirit is a permanent presence in the church, we believe the Word speaks to us in each age and in each place where men gather around the Bible and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

The World

Preaching, to be authentic, to have the ring of saving truth, must touch the hearer at the point where he is in his world, or in his "worlds." The gathering for worship must be honestly related to our dispersion in the world where God has placed the congregations as partners in His mission. The call to come to Jesus Christ is a call to go into the world (John 20:21). The world is the context for preaching, but also its goal and purpose. The motivation for preaching is that God loves the world. The proclamation of Gospel is for all, good news that is freeing and healing and that must be shared

with all.

In looking at the world as a factor in preaching we recognize of course that it is not the world that authenticates, but the world is the goal and aim and purpose of preaching. In this sense the world does not provide the message, but the goal of the Word of God in preaching, and the doing of the Word in the world is the consequence of authentic preaching. As indicated earlier, Anabaptism's Nachfolge Christi concept expresses a world view that is concerned about the unity of faith and life. Even though in Anabaptism there was a "two-world concept," in which the church was seen as existing of those "called out," the church existed for ministry in and to the world.

The recovery of a sense of mission and service for Mennonites after generations of literal withdrawal has been not only an important renewal of the earlier Anabaptist vision, but a rediscovery of Nachfolge Christi in this world. With it has come, particularly in this generation, renewal of a social concern for the church, and preaching that reflects a strong social concern. This has been necessary in the face of the dehumanizing forces at work in our world if the whole Gospel is to be preached to the whole man. The realities of instant communication, supersonic travel, national, racial, and economic power struggles, the population explosion and ecological crisis are all part of our world in which we live and proclaim the Gospel. And the call of the Gospel in the Anabaptist orientation is a call not only to announce the Gospel in response to the Great Commission, but a call to a new creaturehood, to relationship with Christ, and to discipleship in the world.

But as Russell Mast has reminded us, a social concern in preaching dare not be seen apart from the central Biblical event, the kerygma. Social concern comes out of the Gospel, but it is not the whole of the Gospel.⁸² Or again, we may ask whether the real problem is that the church does not intersect with the world, or whether it is, rather, that intersecting with the world, it has anything authentically Christian to say to the world? So John Howard Yoder reminds us:

The need is not for most Christians to get out of the church into the world. They've been in the world all the time. The trouble is that they've been of the world, too. The need is for what they do in the world because they are Christians.⁸³

The church's social concern is based on the corporate character of life, our common involvement in all mankind, as expressed in the fundamental Hebraic concepts of justice (mishpat) and righteousness (tsedeqah). And supremely it is based on our view of the Lordship of Christ. That early confession of the Christian Church, "Jesus is Lord," is a theological formulation, inclusive in its scope, that extends over the whole range of life and human experience.

Anabaptism took Christ's Lordship over life seriously, accepting a this-world view of discipleship. So Menno Simons wrote:

True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant: it clothes the naked, it feeds the hungry, it comforts the sorrowful, it shelters the destitute, it serves those that harm it, it binds up that which is wounded, it has become all things to all men.⁸⁴

Anabaptism, taking as normative also for human life the mes-

⁸²Russell Mast, "Preaching and Social Concerns" (paper read at Pastors' Seminar, November 1, 1968, Elkhart, Ind.), p. 2.

⁸³John Howard Yoder, quoted by Mast, Preach the Word, p. 60.

⁸⁴Menno Simons, op. cit., p. 307.

sage of forgiveness and reconciliation, gave a view of how to live creatively in love, though no experiment in brotherly love has yet been able to transform the whole of culture, the dilemma indicated so clearly by H. Richard Niebuhr in his book, Christ and Culture.⁸⁵

Though the way in which a Christian will live out his life must finally be by way of an inner necessity, culture or no culture, Nachfolge Christi, obedience in discipleship has become an important concept of seeing the meaning and possibilities of the word-deed. As expressed in the world wide mission-relief-service ministries of Mennonite Central Committee in which agricultural and technical assistance, medical aid, educational help, food and clothing for dispossessed refugees, are given "in the name of Christ," is found that combination of concern for the whole person. It is a broad view of proclamation that includes the "Go tell," but also seeks to bind up wounds and heal needs of people in a relational ministry of love made visible in persons. It is a broad view of service (ministry) in which the "in whose name" motivation is not hidden but shared also in Word. To this combination of Word-deed witness persons respond as the Gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ is proclaimed, good news that sets free to live and serve in love.

C. SUMMARY

In seeking to understand what authenticates preaching in the

⁸⁵H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), pp. 149ff, 190-1.

Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, we have looked at the relationship of proclamation and discipleship, and then specifically at factors in preaching, including the Scriptures, preacher, congregation, Spirit, and world.

In considering concerns of the Mennonite tradition, believer's church, autonomy of the congregation, the effort to take seriously the unity of Christian faith and discipleship living in mission-service, we have tried to relate this focus also to the concerns of contemporary Word and engagement theologies. While the Mennonite tradition has emphasized discipleship, the kerygmatic and diakonic functions of the church must be seen in their proper relationship. So the primacy of proclamation must be seen, with discipleship as consequence of the preaching, but also as accompaniment of the proclamation.

In the second part of the chapter as we looked at the Anabaptist-Mennonite reliance on the Scriptures as "guide of faith and life," we further recognized discipleship as a consequence of hearing the Word. We noted too the cruciality of the hermeneutical question, and particularly the significance of the listening and obedient congregation, the hermeneutic community, the body of believers gathered around the Word in the presence of the Spirit. In asking what authenticates the preaching we have had to note that these factors in preaching, the Scriptures, preacher, congregation, and Spirit authenticate the preaching only as they bear witness to Jesus Christ the Living Lord. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Preaching as proclamation of the Gospel, as bringing the re-

source of the Scriptures as Word to bear upon the recognized and unrecognized needs of people so that they may apprehend the Word, Jesus Christ, for their life and individual or corporate witness through the church, is and will likely continue as a crucial function of the pastor in Mennonite churches. However, preaching dare not be conceived of narrowly as a monologue, but utilizing the historic strength of the congregation's Gespräch (discussion in meeting), all the members must become more involved in the proclaiming, sharing, witnessing, interpreting, admonishing, encouraging aspects of preaching. Preacher and hearer alike must expect the Holy Spirit's energizing of human words in that event of preaching where the resource of the Scriptures is brought to bear through the person of the preacher upon people's needs in the contexts of a relational ministry and of the believing community. The preaching must always be explicitly or implicitly the kerygma, God's gracious and mighty act through Jesus Christ, but given in the context of the whole world in such a way that the believing community will respond in life-witness to the reality of the Word. For in relation to the world, discipleship that is response to the Living Lord can also become proclamation in deed and word.

CONCLUSION

The question with which we have been concerned in this study is the authentication of preaching. What gives authority, validity, the ring of saving truth to preaching? We have looked at this question historically, as we have tried to understand the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. Through the questionnaire used with General Conference pastors we have endeavored to find out about the contemporary understanding and practice of preaching in one Mennonite group. Finally, we have examined the relationship of proclamation and discipleship, and what these factors in preaching, the Scriptures, preacher, congregation, Spirit, and world, contribute to preaching and its authentication.

We have noted that the Anabaptist preaching was rooted in the Great Commission. But the emphasis on discipleship living and concern for consolidation led to a hortatory, admonishing practice of preaching. A recovery of "Anabaptist vision" in this century has led to a renewal of emphasis on missions-service, with a continuing discipleship and Christian living emphasis. Though historically Anabaptism's Nachfolge Christi emphasis has been rooted in a deep sense of God's grace and the Lordship of Christ, there is always danger that a discipleship emphasis leads to moralistic preaching, unless the kerygma, the proclamation of the Gospel and the grace of Christ remain at the center of the preaching.

Despite the limitations of the questionnaire used with the General Conference pastors, that study served an important function in

sharpening at least for this writer the need to understand what happens in preaching, and how Scriptures, preacher, congregation, Spirit and world relate, and what their function is in authentic preaching. For in asking what authenticates preaching by analyzing these factors in preaching, we have become more fully aware of their limits, and that authentication of the Scriptures, preacher, and congregation in preaching is ultimately from the Living Lord. So God through the presence of the Spirit authenticates the words of the preacher as they bear faithful testimony to the Word of the Scriptures in witness to Christ to the obedient, listening congregation in the world, and for the sake of the world. What authenticates? Perhaps our question is more accurately asked: Who authenticates? So Paul's assertion which became Menno Simons' motto continues to remind us that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Statements from the Constitution and
Charter of the General Conference Mennonite Church, 1968

Article I, Section 2. Purpose (page 7)

The General Conference Mennonite Church is a fellowship of congregations committed:

1. To proclaim Jesus Christ through appropriate ministries such as evangelism, missions, education, literature, service, relief, and community development to the end that persons may put their trust in God and receive Jesus Christ as Savior from the guilt and power of sin and serve Him as Lord in the fellowship of the church.
2. To establish and maintain local congregations and assist them in Christian worship, nurture, and witness.
3. To understand more adequately the essence of the Christian faith and to accept its implications for total living.
4. To discern the nature of Christian unity, demonstrating and seeking such unity among ourselves in our relationships with other Mennonite groups and in fellowship with other denominations which confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
5. To teach vital and meaningful New Testament principles such as believer's baptism, the peace witness, discipleship, the ethics of love, and the brotherhood church.
6. To acknowledge the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures as source for counsel and direction in fulfilling Christian responsibilities.

Article I, Section 3. Our Common Confession (page 7)

A. Basic Faith. The General Conference believes in the divine inspiration and the infallibility of the Bible as the Word of God and the only trustworthy guide of faith and life; and in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Lord. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11).

In the matter of faith it is, therefore, required of the congregations which unite with the conference that, accepting the above confession, they hold fast to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8, 9; Tit. 3:5), baptism on con-

fession of faith (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38), the avoidance of oaths (Mt. 5:34-37; Jas. 5:12), the biblical doctrine of nonresistance (Mt. 5:39-48; Rom. 12:9-21), nonconformity to the world (Rom. 12:1, 2; Eph. 4:22-24), and the practice of a scriptural church discipline (Mt. 18:15-17; Gal. 6:1).

At no time shall any rules be made or resolutions adopted which in any way contradict the historical principles of faith as laid down in this Constitution.

B. Separated Life.

1. The General Conference believes that membership in oath-bound secret societies, military organizations, or other groups which tend to compromise the loyalty of the Christian to the Lord and to His church is contrary to such apostolic admonitions as: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14, 15), and that the church "should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

2. Further, regarding "the works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-21), the conference believes "That they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Therefore, every congregation should seriously strive to remain free from these evils.

Much rather, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25).

Article II, Section 1. Congregational-Conference Polity (page 9)

A. The Local Congregation. The local congregation as a living organism of the church of Jesus Christ shall be recognized as the basic organizational unit of the General Conference Mennonite Church. The General Conference holds to the congregational form of church government; it is recognized that congregational polity has validation, together with other forms, in the New Testament and in the early church.

B. Association with Other Congregations. Each local congregation shall be expected to relate to other congregations in larger bodies by the unifying Spirit of Christ, primarily in church conferences. In coming together congregations recognize their interdependence and their need for mutual exhortation and admonition, and their strength to fulfill the church's mission in the world. Inter-church organizations, whether local, regional, national, or international, are formed so that the local congregation may join with others in fellowship and in mission.

C. Regional Conferences. While not an association of conferences, the General Conference shall recognize through action at the

triennial conference those regional conferences that shall be considered a part of the General Conference. The rights and responsibilities of such recognized conferences shall be defined by the General Board.

D. The General Conference. The General Conference seeks to be and is an expression of the church of Christ and it shall administer the program assigned to it by the congregations through their representatives. The congregations have every responsibility to support the conference; and, therefore, the conference has a right to lay claim to the support of the local congregations. However, in fulfilling its mission, the conference seeks to serve and strengthen the local congregations and regional conferences, not to control them.

Article II, Section 2. Membership (page 11)

A. Eligibility. Any congregation which agrees with the basic tenets of the Mennonite church, the confession of faith as defined by the General Conference, and the provisions of this Constitution and Bylaws shall be eligible for membership in the General Conference Mennonite Church.

B. Multiple Memberships. Congregations that are members of other Mennonite conferences (other than the General Conference) shall be eligible for membership under the provisions of the Constitution. Such congregations may either withdraw their membership from the other conference or hold multiple memberships.

C. Rights and Privileges. The local congregation shall retain or be given certain rights and privileges as a member of the General Conference:

1. The congregation shall retain the right of final decision to manage its own affairs in its organization, personnel, program, and management of property.

2. The local congregation shall retain the privilege of withdrawing from the General Conference or remaining a member irrespective of its membership in a regional conference or other Mennonite conferences.

3. Through its representatives (delegates) to the General Conference the congregation shall have the privilege to participate in the planning and decision-making of the larger body.

4. Each congregation belonging to the conference shall have a right to the benefits of the conference property in case of dissolution. These rights cease when a congregation withdraws or for other reasons no longer belongs to the conference.

D. Duties. As a member of the General Conference, the congre-

gation shall have the responsibility to be loyal to and support the work of the conference. Specifically:

1. Each congregation shall be represented at every session and shall actively seek to further the interests of the conference during and between sessions.

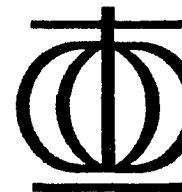
2. Each congregation in its organizational arrangement shall provide for committees or in other ways represent and promote among its membership the various conference service areas, such as missions, education, service, and finance.

3. Each congregation shall insofar as it is possible call ministers that are certified or registered by the General Conference under the provisions and procedures defined by the conference through its Committee on the Ministry and appended to the Bylaws.

4. Each congregation shall make provisions to contribute financially to the work of the conference. The congregation retains the right to determine the method of its support and the designation of its contributions.

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER SENT WITH QUESTIONNAIRE
TO 273 GENERAL CONFERENCE PASTORS



FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH ■ BOX 338 ■ 379 NORTH CAMPUS AVENUE ■ UPLAND, CALIFORNIA 91786

James H. Waltner, Pastor

Phones: Study (714) 982-1669 Home 982-2361

November 17, 1970

Dear Fellow Pastor:

My study at the Claremont School of Theology includes a dissertation project on "The Authentication of Preaching in the Anabaptist-Mennonite Tradition." I have come to this topic as a pastor concerned for and committed to the preaching ministry. In this study I am asking what is it that validates, gives authority, the ring of truth to preaching?

My study includes a historical part in which I attempt to understand how Anabaptist-Mennonites have viewed the Scriptures and the preaching task. As another part of this study I am surveying the pastors of the General Conference churches regarding contemporary Mennonite preaching practice and understanding. A final section will focus on the role of Scriptures, preacher, congregation, Spirit, and world in authenticating preaching.

I solicit your help in this study by 1) completing and returning this questionnaire within one week, and 2) enclosing your church bulletin for Sunday, November 15. (The order of the worship service will permit me to analyze movement of worship, the place of the sermon in worship, relation of the sermon to the Scriptures, hymns, offering, etc.)

Do not sign the questionnaire. The bulletins will not be used to identify questionnaires, and there will be no individual identity of responses. If you do want to share personally with me your understanding of preaching and what "authenticates" preaching, I will of course welcome that in addition to the questionnaire.

Thank you for your cooperation. It is my hope and prayer that even this study may be helpful to us in our common task as servants of God.

In faith,

James H. Waltner

APPENDIX C

STRUCTURING THE WORSHIP SERVICE

Taken from November 15, 1970 bulletins from General Conference churches. The place of the sermon in the movement of worship is underlined.

We enter God's presence
 We approach God
 We recognize each other in God's presence
God speaks to us and we respond to Him

Our praise
Our openness
 Our response

We meet to worship
 The confession and affirmation
The Service of the Word
 We make our response

We come before God
We converse with God
 We commit ourselves to God

We acknowledge God's presence
 We share with God and one another
God speaks to us
 We respond to God

A time to be open to God
 A time for praise
A time to hear God
 A time to decide

Experiencing God's presence
 Confessing and experiencing God's forgiveness
Listening to God's Word
 Responding to God's Word
 Asking God's blessing

Coming before God
 Remembering His gifts but confessing distrust
 Sharing concern
Hearing His Word
 And committing ourselves to Him

We converse with God
 We present our offerings
We listen for God's message
 We go forth to be God's people

Praise to God
God speaks to us
 Our response to God

We gather to worship
We seek God's Word for our day
 We respond to God
 We depart to serve

Invitation to worship
 We sing praise to God
 We share the faith
 We pray for one another
We hear the Word of the Lord
 We depart to serve

APPENDIX D

QUESTIONNAIRE USED BY JAMES WALTNER WITH
THE FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH, UPLAND, CALIFORNIA, NOVEMBER 15, 1970

RESPONSE TO THE SERMON

Male _____ Female _____

Age: under 13 _____, 14-20 _____, 21-30 _____, 31-40 _____,
41-50 _____, 51-60 _____, 61-70 _____, 71 and over _____.

1. Do you think the sermon was clear and understandable?

very much _____ some _____ not much _____ no _____

2. Did the sermon speak to a need or concern you feel?

very much _____ some _____ not much _____ no _____

3. Do you find that any of your ideas were changed by the sermon?

very much _____ some _____ not much _____ no _____

4. Do you feel moved to do something because of the sermon?

very much _____ some _____ not much _____ no _____

5. What authenticated (made valid, gave authority to) this sermon for you? (list 1, 2, 3 in order of importance)

- _____ the use of the Scriptures
- _____ the sincerity of the preacher
- _____ the ordination of the preacher
- _____ the Holy Spirit
- _____ the message spoke to your need
- _____ the credibility (believability) of the message
- _____ other (name) _____

6. What, if anything, kept the sermon from becoming real for you?
(Check as many as apply.)

☐ did not make enough or proper use of the Scriptures
☐ did not get out of the Biblical world to your world
☐ attitude of the preacher
☐ mannerisms of the preacher (Please identify: use of voice ____,
hands ____, eyes ____, other (name) ____).
☐ did not speak to your need
☐ distraction in the congregation
☐ weariness or lack of preparation on part of the hearer
☐ other (name) _____

7. What suggestions do you have that might improve the sermon?

8. What questions or concerns would you like the preacher to deal with
in the pulpit?

APPENDIX E

PERSONS, SCHOOLS, AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

LISTED BY PASTORS AS INFLUENCING THEIR PREACHING

(Question D.3 of questionnaire)

<u>Persons</u>	<u>Schools</u>	<u>Schools of Thought</u>
Achtenmeier, E. & Paul	Canadian Mennonite	Anabaptist view of
Adrian, J. D.	Bible College (9)	the church (2)
Bonhoeffer (2)	Bethel College (3)	Biblical theology
Barclay, W.	Mennonite Biblical	Campus Crusade
Barth (2)	Seminary (14)	evangelical (3)
Bowman, Rufus	Bethany Biblical	existentialism
Charles, Howard	Seminary	Faith at Work (2)
Dyck, Hans	Dallas Theological	non-dispensational
Epp, Menno	Seminary (2)	premillennial
Enz, J. J. (3)	Elim Bible School	Calvinistic
Faw, Chalmer	Grace Seminary	
Fink, Paul R.	Grace Bible	
Friesen, J. R.	Institute (5)	
Fuller, Charles E.	Lutheran Seminary	
Fretz, J. Herbert	Menno Bible Institute	
Gaeddert, Albert	Mennonite Brethren	
Gaeddert, John	Bible College	
Harms, G. N.	Moody Bible Institute	
Head, Dr.	New York Biblical Seminary (2)	
Hendriks, Howard	Northwest Bible School	
Hoepfner, I.	Steinbach Bible School	
Janzen, Waldemar	Swift Current Bible School (2)	
Jones, E. Stanley	Union Biblical Seminary	
Kennedy, Gerald	Winkler Bible School	
Klassen, William		
Mast, Russell (3)		
Morgan, G. C.	Stewart, James	
Peters, Frank C.	Thielicke, Helmut (3)	
Read, David H. C.	Tompson, Elmer	
Regehr, J.	Unruh, A. H.	
Rempel, J. G.	Unruh, Jacob	
Richert, P. H.	Warkentin, A.	
Ritschl, Dietrich	Waltner, Erland (5)	
Robinson, Dr.	Wiebe, A. J.	
Schroeder, David	Wiebe, Ed. J.	
Shenk, Stanley	Wiebe, Henry	
Sangster, William	wife	
Steimle, Ed (2)	parents (3)	

APPENDIX F

A STATEMENT ON THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

This statement represents the position taken by the General Conference Mennonite Church at its 1962 triennial conference at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, expressing its faith and serving as a guide and basis for further study by the district conferences and local churches. An amplified statement under the title, "A Christian Declaration on the Authority of the Scriptures" was published by the General Conference in 1962.

Since the early Anabaptist movement was the result of a re-discovery of the Scriptures as the revealed word of God and authoritative in all matters of faith and practice;

Since there is in our time much confusion, uncertainty, and divergent opinion concerning the inspiration and authority of Scripture;

And because we are in need of a positive statement with regard to the authority and inspiration of Scripture in order to strengthen the church in such a way as to give spiritual unity and power in proclamation;

Be it resolved that we accept the following affirmation of faith with respect to the authority and inspiration of Scripture.

1. We affirm that ultimate truth and life are to be found only in God and that all truth, therefore, is of necessity one and indivisible.
2. We believe that though God revealed himself in nature, and fall of man into sin made necessary a special divine revelation in order that man might receive a true knowledge of God.
3. This special self-revelation of God, which was begun in His revelation of himself to Israel, was ultimately fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. The meaning of the once-for-all events of God's revelation in both the Old and New Covenant for the salvation of mankind were interpreted for us by Jesus Christ and the writers of Scripture.
4. We believe that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Spirit of God, thus securing for the church the Scriptures in such a way that the church may trust its verbal form as an adequate, authentic, and sufficient vehicle of divine revelation.

5. We believe that the witness to the revelatory events of God in Christ and their meaning for us were guarded over by the apostles in the early church, after which this apostolic witness was authentically recorded by the New Testament writers. Thus the authentic witness to God's work of salvation in Christ was laid down in Scripture for all time.

6. We acknowledge that the Bible was written by men chosen by God in a specific period in history and that their writings share certain characteristics of all other human documents. Since God in His sovereign will has chosen the biblical books as a means of imparting to man His message of salvation, their human character, their multiplicity, and their form cannot be considered as impairing the truth and efficacy of the Bible.

7. We believe that the Spirit of God working through the church established the canon, thus binding the church to the witness of the writers of the Bible and thereby making it the keeper and guardian of a historical testimony which she can neither alter nor augment.

8. We believe that the full revelation of God made in His disclosure of himself to Israel and through Jesus Christ His Son is accessible to us ultimately only through the Holy Scriptures and is our final infallible authority in all matters of faith and practice.

9. We believe that the church must continue to place herself under the authority of Jesus Christ and His word, being obedient to His will, searching the Scriptures and preaching the word as He has commanded her to do.

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